

THE
LIBERTY
OF
PRAYER

Asserted, and Guarded from

glH

LICENTIOUSNESS.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

Cum Judice fabulatur, & ad ejus penetralia Precator admittitur; Neque ullus inde respuitur, nisi qui in oratione Tepidus invenitur. Cass. in Psal.

Multoque melius est de duobus imperfectis Rusticitatem sanctam habere, quam Eloquentiam peccatricem. Hier. in ep. ad Nepot.

~~—~~ L O N D O N :

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THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

THE Design of this little Tract
is not to make or Widen any
Breaches: But rather to contri-
bute some Endeavours towards the *Heal-*
ing of those *Wounds* which Angry men
delight still to *Vex* and *Torture*: Nor
would I Expose *Prayer* as Cheap and
Contemptible to any, But make it Easy
and *Familiar* to all. That such as have
but little List to it, or Kindness for it,
may see what *Need* there is of it, and be
Quickened to it: And that others who
have more Inclination this way, but find
many *Rubs* and *Perplexities* lying be-

The Preface

fore them, may see the *Passage* clear'd, and perceive that there are no such Difficulties in it, but what any ordinary man, who means well, may Easily deal with: And so be Encouraged to proceed, And not Drag on Heavily, but find the Duty a Delight, And *Serve the Lord with Gladness.* T O T

I confess the first *Occasion* of this Discourse was given by some Passages in Two Sermons upon *Eccles. V. 2.* Preach'd and lately Publish'd by a Reverend and Learned *Doctor*, whose Name I forbear to mention, Not for dread of a *Stab* from his Pen: But out of Regard to his Person, as well as Place, both upon the Account of what I have heard him, long ago, speak from the Pulpit, in Defence of the Faith, Doctrine and Religion of the Church of *England*, expressed in her *Articles*: And also what I have seen, of late, in some of his Writings from the Press, to the same Intent: Particularly his just *Zeal* to Vindicate the *Gospel-Doctrine* of our Blessed

to the Reader.

sed Saviour's Satisfaction, against the ~~Paganish~~ Principles of such as employ their Parts and Wit to *Ridicule* it.

Nor do I take upon me any Crimination of the main Contents of those very *Sermons*, in which yet there is somewhat that I make bold to Reflect on. For as I know how greatly they are in *Vogue* with many, (who perhaps may like the *Erifical* squabbling Subject, better than they do the old *Anti-Remonstrant* Author :) So I profess my self Beholden to him, for some curious *Notions* I learned from them: And do find a great deal more, wherein I heartily *Subscribe* and *Consent* to him: And all along, give him the due praise of his exact Method, his elaborate Periods, his surprizing Turns of Wit, and Quickness of Expression. But there are other Words and Things he has dropt here and there, which, in my apprehension, seem not so agreeable to the *Genius* of the *Gospel*: at which indeed I have stumbled: and am afraid they

The Preface

may have but a sorry Effect, in giving Prejudice to many more considerable than my self: Yea to give the *Enemies of the Lord* occasion to *Blaspheme*: And to startle the pious Souls of Weak Christians, and make them afraid to Stand fast in the *Liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us *Free*.

Not every florid *Harangue*, trimm'd with *Witticisms*, and pointed with *Sarcasms*, to make the *Juvenile Academicks* Merry, is the most Edifying discourse to Better the World. I can remember since such *Athenian Entertainments* were Transporting *Musick* to my self: which now I Abhor as the most harsh and grating *Noises*. And I cannot applaud that for the *Best Sermon*, which makes the worst part of the Audience most *Sport*. May I be so happy to speak to the Conscience and Satisfaction of *Serious* and *Experienced Christians*; And I am in little care to Tickle the wanton ears of *Novices* in Religion, and *Scoffers* at *Devotion*.

But

to the Reader.

But so far as I have somewhere briefly made bold to touch upon this Reverend *Divine*, 'Tis not in the bitter Satirical strain, wherein he has of late thought fit to handle his learned *Brother*. Indeed, (as some are startled to observe a new sort of *Calvinian Rigor*, and such boisterous Blasts from that Point, which has a Name for the Mildest Quarter, so) I cannot but Admire to see men so freely deal their Blows, and let fly at others, for *Insufferable Insolence* both of Animad. p. *Stile and Temper*, crying out 353. of them for *Infinitely Scornful*, and *Extreamly Spightful*; Thus seeming to Forget that Duty which (say they) every man owes both to *Decency* and *himself*, always obliging him to speak only as becomes him, however *Adversaries* provoke him. A good Rule, so apt to be forgotten, That he whom most tongues do praise for teaching us the *Government* of the Tongue, complains It is a piece of *Morality* which sober *Nature* dictates, and yet in Controversies many of our greatest *Scholars* seem

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totally to have Unlearnt it : Managing Dis-
putes in Religion with such Virulence, that
one would think the Disputants
Dec. Christ had put off much of Humanity,
Pi. p. 279; before they came thus to treat of
Divinity.

Nor should I have said any thing
at all wherein this Author might have
thought himself concerned, had not I
feard, his Reflections might Hurt others,
more than mine are like to Damnify
him. But being equally Engaged with
him in the Common Cause of Preach-
ing the *Gospel*, As far as I understand
it, Wo to me if I do it not. And
when I know that *Gospel* to be no
Servile Yoke, but a *Law of Liberty* : As
such therefore I do appear for it. And
whoever cry out of a Gap opened to
Licentiousness, I think we should be in
as much care to Maintain the *Liberty*,
as to prevent the *Abuse*. Or else they
who complain so much of the *Priest-
Riding*, (however abusively they are
wont to apply it ; Yet) may pick out
matter

to the Reader.

matter for a just Charge, That we *Han-*
dle the word of God deceitfully, and Shun to
declare to them all the Counsel of God: And
like *Lords over his heritages, and Harder*
Masters than Christ, withhold from them
what he has Granted them: And *Tie them*
up, where he has set them Free.

It will be no Surprize to me, If I
find the Reward so commonly bestow-
ed on such as write *Irenicums*, for Ad-
justing and Compounding Litigious mat-
ters, i. e. To be pincht on both Sides.
The *Antesignani* that lead Contending Par-
ties, tho all to pieces in every thing
else, yet can meet and hold together,
like Sampson's *Foxes*, to carry *Firebrands*,
and set the Fields all in a Flame. I
know what the *Moderate man* uses to be
taken for, among such furious Drivers:
But I must beg their pardon, If I can-
not take them for any of the best Judges.
I had much rather be determined by
our late most Reverend and Renown-
ed Primate, (whose great Soul much
d disdain'd the mean Service of our Squib-
bing

The Preface.

bing Boutefus, that fill the Church with endless Noise, and Heat, and pother, about the Mint, Annise and Cummin: But was for having all such Bones Buried before his Own); and I cannot forbear to quote a Golden Paragraph, worthy of such an Excellent Author, in his Preface to a Collection of Bishop Wilkins Sermons, vindicating the most deserved Fame of that Right Reverend Prelate; says he, I purposely mention his Moderation, and likewise adventure to commend him for it; Notwithstanding that this Virtue, so much esteemed and Magnified by Wise men, in all Ages, has of late been Declaim'd against with so much Zeal and Fierceness, and yet with that good Grace and Confidence, as if it were not only no Virtue, but even the Sum and abridgement of all Vices. I say, notwithstanding this, I am still of the old opinion, That Moderation is a Virtue, and one of the peculiar ornaments and advantages of the excellent Constitution of our Church, and must at last be the temper of her Members, especially the Clergy, if ever we seriously intend

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to the Reader.

the firm Establishment of this Church, and do not industriously design, by cherishing heats and divisions among ourselves, to let in Popery at those Breaches.

I break not in upon any thing that is *Established*, nor confront whatever for *Decency and Order* is *Appointed*: being well satisfied, That I can be a *Member* and *Minister* of the *Church of England*, and yet the *Lord's Free-man*. Yea whenever I look towards *Rome*, I cannot but bless his Name, That by the *Grace of God I am Where, and What I am.*

But I cannot think they are *True* to their *Lord*, nor *Just* to their *Church*, nor yet *Kind* to their *Brethren*, who would have men under their *Girdle*, where the *Lord*, and the *Church* both has left them at *Liberty*. What is so *Graciously Given* and *Granted*, I do *Plead for*, in behalf of every one that ought to *Share* in it. And if thou art contented with this, *Reader*, and craveſt no more, Take so much *Liberty*, without *scruple*, and much good may it do thee: And so *Farewell.*

T H E

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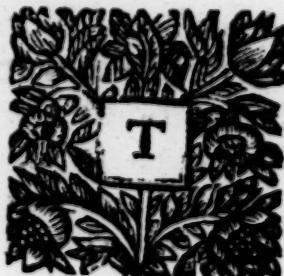
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P A R T I.

T H E

Liberty of PRAYER Asserted.

*The Introduction, pleading for Prayer
it self.*



THE *Liberty of Prophecyng* (which is a *Disputable Priviledge*, and not belonging to many,) hath been Asserted by a famous *Author*: And why may not any one Assert the *Liberty of Prayer*, which is a Priviledge Uncontroverted, wherein every one in the World hath a Right? *Should not a People seek to their God?* Is not only the voice of Scripture, but the very Suggestion of *Nature*, to every Reasonable Creature, who in the sence of his Wants, is taught to *Seek out for Supply*; And when any thing ails him, to cry *O God!* And look out for Help from *Above*.

The same Light which shews us a *God*, teaches us also the Veneration of that *Almighty Being* which is so Superlatively Excellent. *Psal. 86. 9, 10.* *All Nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee O Lord: And shall Glorify thy Name.* *For thou art Great, and dost Wondrous things: Thou art God alone.* No *Ethnicks* that ever own'd any Deity, have denied *Invocation*: which is as the *Bucket* whereby we draw out of God's Infinite Fulness, to supply our wants. Even those rude *Seamen*, *Jon. 1. 5.* *Cried every man to his God.* And St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 10. 12.* *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.* 'Tis the *Reasonab'e Service* which every Wise considering man must needs chuse and perform. Nor can we make any better Use of the *Reason* which God hath given us to *Know* Him: or of the *Speech* wherewith he hath endowed us to express his *Glory*. Indeed our very *Precarious Beings* call us to *Prayers*: As all *Weak* things are taught by the *Dictates* of their own Nature, to make towards, and *Lean* upon, that which will Support them: The *Hop*, the *Vine*, the *Ivy*, (that cannot stand *Themselves*,) With their wires and Tendrils catch hold on somewhat else to bear them up. So what should poor *Derivative* Creatures but repair to the *Almighty Giver*, to be also the Continual *Preserver* of their *Being*? When we feel our-selves still verging to Nothing, And that we have

no power to *hold our Souls* in Life one Moment: Whither shall we betake our selves, but to the *Root* of all Being for Support? And in the want of every thing, whither but to the *Fountain of all Goodness*, for Supply? We hang upon Him still for our Being, and all the Comforts of it; who continues to Create us every moment. And Prayer is the Souls *Flying back* again to Him from whom it came: Who exacts our Devotions, as the Sun draws *Vapours* from the earth: Not to retain them for his own Benefit, but to rain them down in *Showers* of Mercy upon us. The *Debt* is owing to him, but the paying of it, only Advantageous to ourselves: And in serving him, we serve our own best *Interest*.

He commands indeed many things above the power of *Nature*, to bring us upon our Knees for his *Grace*, that where our strength *ends*, there our Prayers may *begin*: And that we may Seek for that in Him, which we have not in ourselves. And tho the infinitely *Wise* and *Good* needs neither our Confessions, to *Inform* him of our Wants, Nor our Petitions to make him *Inclinable* to Relieve them: Yet he will be *Enquired* of by us, to do for us: And notwithstanding He *Blots out our Transgressions for his Own Sake*: Yet he Calls on us to Call upon Him: And bids, *Put me in Remembrance: Let us plead together: Declare thou, that thou maist be justified.* Isa. 43. 25. and 6. And by this means we come to *Bethink ourselves*,

selves, From whence it is that we have all: That we may not impute to our *Good Luck*, what we owe to the *Divine Bounty*: Nor Undervalue the Favours of *Heaven*, coming so Lightly by them, without any *Seeking*. He will have us exercise our Repentance towards him, our Dependance upon him, and our Affiance in him: So to *Dispose* us for ~~the~~ the Reception and Fruition of what we would have from him. And therefore Invites us to his *Gates*, that he may load us with his *Blessings*: And commands us to *Ask*, and *Seek*, and *Knock*, That we may receive, and *Find*, and *Enjoy*. This *Key* the Gracious God is pleas'd to put into our Hands, That we may go to all the inexhaustible *Treasures* of his Bounty, even as we go to our Table for Meat. That we who are so *Indigent* and *Beggarly*, may be throwly furnished with Him, who is *Able to do exceeding abundantly, even above all that we ask or think*. And O how well is it for us! And what riches of Grace from the Lord of Love, That the Gates of Heaven shall be open'd at our Knocking: That a Supply shall be Granted for our Asking: And that our diligent Seeking shall be rewarded with ~~Finding~~ *Eternal Glory*! O how would the *Courts* of *Kings* be thronged, if their Gates and Hearts and Hands were so Open to all Comers? If it were no more, but *Come* and *Ask* and *Have*?

It is not more needful for a Creature to live in *Dependance* on his Maker and Preserver, But it is as full of sweet Satisfaction, for poor frail *Insufficient* wretches, who Want every thing, and lye open here still to all Changes and Troubles and Dangers, To have an All-sufficient Helper, and the safest Sanctuary to Repair to, and Solace our selves in. O what should we do, and whither Betake our selves, if we had not this Happy *Retreat* to turn in at? If left Desolate to shift for our selves, and make us a Happiness or want it? O Kind word then from a Good God, *Come unto me*, and *Call upon me*. As if he should say, *Unload your heavy Hearts with me*, And *Cast your Care upon me*: Make known your Requests to me, and put the matter into my Hands; And I will take Care of you, and Provide for you. O the easy Access that a poor soul has to the Throne of Grace! Where (as the good Bishop *Hall* speaks,) it is not *Death to draw nigh, before the Golden Scepter be extended*. No Time out of season, No Person so inconsiderable, No Words so ordinary, no Boon so big, No Grant so hard, as to give the hearty Supplication a Repulse, But rising like a thin *Mist* from the earth, it returns in a plentiful *Rain* of manifold Blessings.

Our kind *Redeemer* chides us that we make no more use of this sweet and blessed Advantage. *Joh. 16. 24. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name; Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* And how well do we deserve to go with-

out that, which we count not worth so much as the *Asking* for? O that we should be so *Listless* to do our selves Good, when the *God of all Grace* is so Willing to be Kind? As it was said of the Emperor *Severus*, (*Molestius erat illi nihil peti, quam dare*,) It troubled him more to be Asked nothing, than to give much. And to the Courtier that made not bold with him, he would say, (*Quid est quod nihil petis?*) What's the matter, thou askest no Boon of me? Let me know what thou wouldst have, that thou maist not complain, Thou art never the better for me. So does the Lord of Love delight to see the Face of his *Spouse*, and to *Hear her Voice*. Cant. 2. 14. He solicites for Suiters, Joh. 4. 23. Waits to be Gracious: Loves the Opportunities of dispensing his Favours: And bids, *Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.* Isa. 45. 22. So far is he, (who knows what Need we all have of Him,) from Discouraging any to Approach him, That he gives free leave and *License* to every one. All may come that *Will*. Nay it is not *As they Will*, But he has made it their *Duty* to Come: and all must be *Supplicants* or *Rebels*.

It is not then the Liberty to *Pray* or *Not to Pray*, that is to be Discoursed of: But the *Permission* that every one has, to frequent the *Throne of Grace*: The Boldness to Ask, Seek, and Knock at Heaven's Gates: Yea and chiefly, The *Freedom of Address*, any Where, at any Time or in any becoming Manner. Thô it be not at the *Church*,

Church, nor within Canonical Hours, nor just in this or that Mode and Form.

We are indeed Bound to it: But yet we must make a *Free will offering* of it, and the *Volunteers* at our Prayers. For if it be a *Forced-put*, it is not Religion. *Beasts* might, but *Men* must not, be *Dragg'd* to God's *Altar*: nor be *Threatned* with Happiness, nor *Clubb'd* into Heaven. No compulsion here, but by dint of *Argument*, and the charms of *Perswasion*: When we are so *Convinc'd* and wrought upon, that we know not how to *Stand out* against that, which appears every way so Rational, Needful and Beneficial.

This *Liberty of Praying*, (i.e. All the Liberty which Nature and scripture give: So as not to run into that *Lisentiousness*, which I shall take care to *Gard* it from in the *Second Part* of this Discourse): It may be considered, Not only as to the *Leave* and Encouragement Given, from Heaven, to our Prayers: And the fair *Invitation* made, (with Assurance of good *Welcome* and Happy Success, to *All Flesh* that come to Him,) by the *God that Heareth Prayers*: (And whois pleased therefore to put that property among his *Titles*, As a mighty Attractive, to draw us with comfortable Expectation, to Him:) But the *Liberty of Praying* will admit of a more particular consideration, with respect to the *Matter, Manner, Time and Place* of Prayer: And the *Persons*, both Praying, and Prayed for.

C H A P. I.

The Liberty of Praying, as to the Matter.

FOR the *Matter* of Prayer, or the *Petenda* which we may put on for: There is a very Large Grant, and as much *Scope* given as any one can tell how to wish. Mat. 21. 22. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, Believing, ye shall receive.* It leaves out nothing Desirable, that a man can *Need*, or has the Boldness to *Crave*. But yet when words are too Wide for the *Matter*, they must be Limited according to the *Mind* of the Author. Which Rule is here to take place; For who can imagine that our *Lord* would put us upon Praying for things *Unlawful*? things that would *Disonor* him to Grant, and *Ruin* us to *Have*? which yet would be comprehended under *All things whatsoever*, taken without any *Limitation*. Who can imagine, That he should ever countenance the *Wanton* Praying for Health to fulfil his *Lufts*? Or the *Malicious* for opportunity to execute his *Rage*? Or the *Ambitious* for High places to gratify his *Pride*? Or the *Covetous* Praying for the Death of all that stand between him and an *Estate*? Or the *High-way man* forrich Booty, and Success in his adventures and *Villany*.

Men may be ashamed to make their Tongues the *Index* of their Minds, as to such *Extravagant*

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Desires, which yet notwithstanding may find harbor in their Hearts. But these wild and wicked Requests, be sure, are none of the Petitions which our *Holy Saviour* emboldens us to offer. The *Devil*, that is very free of what is none of his own, will promise without Exception, as he did to *Christ* himself, *All these things will I give thee*. But by our Lord's *All*, we must never understand any more than is *Lawful* and *convenient*: What is Fit for us to Ask, And what he has promised to *Bestow*: i. e. *The Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*: With the addition of such Worldly *Appendages*, as his Wisdom knows proper and Good for us. Spiritual accomplishments, and Temporal Advantages too: Even all needful to bring us to *Heaven*: And, till we reach thither, to *Support* us on Earth. But we must not offer *Unreasonable Requests*, To have all that a roving Fancy can tower up: Or for *Impossible* things, That God should *falsify* his Word, to save us without *Holiness*: Nor put him upon the expence of *Miracles*, to make us on a suddain, The most Learned or Great in the world: Nor *Limit the Holy One* to just the particulars of our naming: As the mother of *Zebedee's* children, *That the one might sit on the Right, and the other on the Left Hand, in his Kingdom*: Nor *Tempt the Lord our God, to turn Stones into Bread*, Asking to be fed in our Sloth, and carelessness to help our selves.

But *All things* we have Liberty to ask, That make for the *Glory* of our Lord, and for our own real *Good* here, and our *Eternal Salvation* hereafter.

after. Indeed what he would have us Importune our Father which is in Heaven for, He hath given us a *Catalogue* of, in that best *Platform* of Prayer, by which all ours are to be Modelled : *i. e.* To mind first the *Glorifying* and *Pleasing* of God, And then the Serving of our own turns. The Blessings of Wisdom's *Right Hand*, Such as the Pardon of sin, the Knowledge of our Lord's Will, the Graces of God's Spirit, and Eternal Life, We are to pray for Urgently and *Absolutely*, Because the things cannot chuse but prove for our *Good* : And we cannot Glorify God, and do Well without them. Light and Grace, and Sanctification, and the *Spirit of Supplication*, we must seek before Gifts, and Peace, and Consolation : Because we may go *Weak and Troubled* to Heaven : But if we know not *God's ways* we shall not *Enter into his Rest* : And without *Holiness* no *seeing the Lord*.

Then the *World's Good*, and what concerns our present *Well-being* in it, As Food and Raiment, Health and Ease, Deliverance and Quiet, Fruitful seasons, and Prosperous circumstances, We may pray for too ; and not count it *Carnal* to Seek after even those things which the *Gentiles* do ; When our Heavenly Father, not only knows we have *Need of them*, but also by his Command, makes it our Duty to *Ask them* : And by his *Promise*, gives us Encouragement to Ask in Hopes of Receiving them. We may Beg so much of the *World's Good*, as will really do us *Good* : Yea and desire what shall *Comfort*, as well

well as *Support* us: In case it do not Hinder, but Promote, our *Duty*. Tho' we dread the Best things of this World, for our *Portion*, Yet even these temporal Fruitions are desirable, on Condition, That we may thereby *Honour* our Lord, and Secure our *Salvation*. For we are not sure, that those *Means* will effectually promote these *Ends*. God knows whether we shall be *Better*, in a Rich, Healthy, Prosperous, Or in a Poor, Sick, and Troubled state. He is sometimes Kindest to us, In *Denying* us what we are Eagerest upon. *The Chusing of our Inheritance for us* then, we had best Refer to Him: And be well pleased to be at his *Finding*, however he is pleased to use us.

But yet in the *Conditional Petition* even for Temporal things, we are not so Tied up, as to ask what comes to *Nothing* at all, and leave the matter just as we found it. There is more *Liberty* here, than for the *Sick* man to pray as much for the Continuance or Increase of his *Disease*, as to have it Mitigated or Removed. The Request may be *Absolute*, only attended with a signified or a Silent *Submission* to the wise and good Disposal of the great *Lord* of all, tho' he should determine otherwise. We may heartily *Desire* the thing: But yet not be so *Set* upon it, as to desire it in any *Cafe*, Tho' God should be *Offended*, or our Souls *Damnified*, if not *Undone* by it. We may desire *Honor*, the better to serve the Publick Good: And *Wealth*, more to *Honor the Lord*, and *Cherish* the Poor, with our

our Substance : And Health, and Strength, and Length of Days, That we may be more Serviceable in our generation, and bring greater Glory to our Heavenly Father. Provided still, we humbly Resign our Wills to His, and take it Patiently, Tho' we be Cross'd, and fail of our Wishes : Yea perswading our selves, then, It is Best for us, that so it should be. The World's good things we must desire but Sparingly, As not being sure but they may Succeed no better to us, than the Quails to the Israelites, to make us the Worse for them. But Covet earnestly the Best Gifts, those Holy qualifications, and Heavenly Blessings that Accompany Salvation, which will certainly do us Good, and make us Happy. Whether we come in, or be left out of the Distribution of such Common Favours, as God, with an Indifferent hand, scatters among all sorts of men, That we may be Remembred with the Favour which He bears to his People, and Visited with the Joy of his Salvation. Little need have we to mind the Stuff here, when all the Good of the Promised Land is before us. And how well may that be called All, which takes in whatever the Largest Soul of man can wish?

We cannot ask the thing that is not there,
Blaming the Shallowness of our Request. Herb.

His is the Power, to whom we Pray : And his Hand is never Shortned, But with the greatest Ease, can Effect whatever we would have.

Let

Let us not then be *Streightned* in our Prayers, when we have so much *Liberty* given us : And we cannot *Open our mouths* so wide, but He whose *Gift is Eternal Life*, has promised to *Fill them* : And to pleasure us not only to the *Half*, but even the *Whole* of his Kingdom. And what more can we *Ask* or *think*, than *All Heaven*, and *Glory everlasting*, with whatever is *Conducing* Here, to bring us *Safe* thither?

Poor Christian, who art *Humble* and *Contrite*, *Trembling at Gods Word*, Be not *Modest* in thy own *Wrong* : When thou art allowed to *Enlarge* thy *Desires* as wide as to what's *Infinite* : *Lose* it not for want of *Asking*. Thou mayst think a *Crown and Kingdom*, most *Glorious* and never failing, too *Good* for thee, a *Sinful wretch*, to *expect* : But they are not too *Great* for the God *Infinitely Good*, to *Bestow*. This is the drift of all thy Prayers : No less thou art to *beg*, than *Christ*, and with him *All things* : In this world, the *Knowledge*, and *Love*, and *Obedience* of Gods *Truth*, and in the world to come, *Life everlasting*. And that End of thy *Faith*, *The Salvation of thy Soul*, as it must be the *Aim*, so it will be the *Consequence* of thy Prayers. For *whosoever shall Call on the Name of the Lord shall be Saved*. Rom. 10. 13. Do but *Ask* as thou should'st, and thou shalt *Have* what thou *Wilt*.

C H A P. II.

The Liberty of Praying, as to the Manner.

THE Liberty of Praying is not so great for the Matter, But it is yet greater for the Manner. If Men will not go to Tye us up, where God hath left us Free. For tho' our Lord hath Limited us, as to the Particulars to be asked : So, that we are to ask nothing, but what may be Reduced to some of the Heads which he hath prescribed : Yet who could ever think that he tyed us up only to those very Words ? When as all Supplicants still, (together with, or without those,) have been accustomed to other Words : And yet not feared to transgress the Order of our Saviour.

But by this Liberty of the Manner of Prayer, I understand, The Freedom and Boldness of Address : Using of the Voice or not : Long Prayers or Short : Plain or Elegant : This Posture or that : A Form or none : One Form or another : Chusing which Part shall go first : And Altering, Adding, or Diminishing, according as we shall judge most Agreeable and Beneficial to our selves and others.

S E C T. I.

Of the Freedom and Boldness of Address.

Notwithstanding the infinite *distance* between us, and the *most High God*: We are encouraged to *come Boldly to the Throne of Grace*. Heb. 4. 16. Provided we Remember that we are *Creatures*, We are not to forget that we are *Children*: Children indeed of the *most High*: Yet *Behold, God is Mighty, and Despiseth not any*. Job 36. 5. As we must Manage our privilege so that the *Goodness of God may not cause us to forget his Greatness*: (as the *Doctor* gives a good *Caution*:) Serm. p. 112.
So, *Vice versa*, That his *Greatness* may not cause us to forget his *Goodness*. As it is said of *Luther*, That he prayed, (*Tantâ Reverentiâ, ut si Deo, Tantâ Confidentialiâ ut si Amico*: So Reverently as to God, so Confidentially as to his *Friend*. For tho' God be the greatest King, Yet he takes not so much *State* as the Meanest. For what King keeps a Court so Open, as to give Admittance to *All Comers*? Or tho' they Get in, every one must not look to *Speed*. But he that lives never so *Obscure* on Earth, may go when he will, and Speak to the *King of Heaven*: Who not only *Authorizes* our *Access*, but *Invites* us into his *Presence*: And likes us so much the Better, the *More* we ask: And is Kinder and Better to us, than all the best and

and dearest *Friends* we have in the world.

God's Children have not received *The Spirit of Bondage again to Fear*: But the *Spirit of Adoption* whereby they cry *Abba Father*. Rom. 8. 15. Not to Fear? Why 'tis *Madness* not to Fear Him, at whose mercy we lye, and who hath the *Power* of us, to do what he will with us: No such *Hearts-ease*, as to feel our hearts softened into an Awful regard of the Glorious *Majesty* of the World, To Reverence his Name, and to be afraid to Lose and Offend Him. Such as *Fear* him are call'd upon to *Praise* him. Psal. 135. 20. His filial Fear is not Inconsistent with his cheerful Praises. Who do so Fear him, have indeed most cause to *Praise* him, That by his Grace, he has wrought them to such a *Child-like* disposition. Nay the very representations of God as a Terrible Judge, a *Consuming Fire*, may do us the greatest Kindness, To Hasten our flight from *the Wrath to come*: (As any one would give us cause of many Thanks, to Affright us from a deadly *Precipice*, upon which he saw us ready to run and to be Ruined :) But then the Fear which God's children have of him, is not a *Slavish* tormenting Dread, to affright them from Him, But such a Caution and Circumspection, as drives them out of dangers *Home to Him*, to *Shelter under his Wings*. Still they are to look upon him, clad in Garments of *Salvation*, as well as of *Majesty*: *Benevolous* to his Creatures, and especially *Good to the Soul that Seeks him*: Not *Hard*, but on- ly

ly to be *Provoked* : and *easie to be Intreated* : Full of Invitation, and all Encouragements and Endearments, to raise ~~off~~ Hope, and enflame our Love. Not inviting us to Him, for any *Ends* upon us, but only to be *Good* to us : Loving all the occasions to *Exert* his Bounty, and can deny the children of his *Family* no reasonable Request. Yea as much delighting to Give, as we to Receive : As the Mother is no less pleas'd to have her Breasts *Drawn*, than the Child to *Suck*. Nor does he part with his mercies, as one that is with *Difficulty* drawn to it ; But only stays, till we are *Ready* to receive the things we ask, i.e. indeed till they will do us *Good*. (For till we are Ready for them, they are not *Good* for us.) And our Prayers are not to make him more *Willing*, but to make us more *Prepared*.

We must not go to God then *Discouraged* with a Servile *Dread*, but repair to Him, as to a *Father* : Tho' offended, yet *Willing* to be Reconciled : And therefore puts us on to *Ask* our Pardon, that we may Receive it. And that he ~~will~~ will not *Clear the Guilty*, should yet be no Terror to any pious Souls in *Christ Jesus*, Who are *Accepted in the Beloved*, even as if they had not Sinned. And *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of Gods Elect* ? When there is nothing in God Against them, but all For them. He that is of *Purer Eyes than to Behold Iniquity*, Sees none in them, but what he has received an *Atonement* for. And so for all the Faults in them, *Fury is not in Him*. He is a Friend even to *Sinners* ;

ners, in Him that hath Satisfi'd for their Sins. When they *Look unto Jesus*, That is their Worshipping towards the *Temple*, where God is *Propitious*. And when we are apt to be *Astonished* at the infinite Greatness and Majesty, the Justice and Purity of God, Let us Bethink ourselves, That yet we have to do with a God *Satisfied for our Sins*; and, in the *Son of his Love*, Reconciled to our Souls. And thô we have no other *Door of Admission* into the *Divine Presence*, Yet we have *Boldness*, and *access with Confidence*, *thrô the Faith of Him*, who is The *Propitiation for our sins*. Out of this *Angel's Hand*, the *Smoak of the Incense* that comes with the *Prayers of the Saints*, ascends up before God with a grateful *Perfume*. Rev. 8. 4. And nothing fails that is put into his Hands, who Heartens all his members and followers, John 15. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Having therefore *Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus*, And such a high Priest, as is *Holy, Harmless, Undefiled, Separate from sinners*, and *made Higher than the Heavens*, where he *Ever lives to make Intercession for us*: And is *Able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God thrô Him*: We are to *Draw nigh with a true heart, in full Assurance of Faith*. Heb. 7. 25. and 6. Ch. 10. 19, 22.

Upon this *Satisfaction* and *Mediation* of the Beloved of God's Soul, *In whom he is Well pleased*, is grounded all (the *mapphew*) that Freedom

dom of Speaking used by the Children of God, which makes them so *Bold* with their Heavenly Father: And yet no more Bold than *Welcome*. This makes them so *Importunate* and pressing, Yea so Daring, as even to *Argue* and reason the case with their *Maker* and *Judge*: and as it were, to *Quarrel with his Mercy*: (as Bishop *Hacket* expresses it.) To enter the *Lists* with Omnipotence, and *Wrestle* for the Blessing: To *Capitulate*

Christian Con-
sol. p. 129.

and Plead with God, by Arguments drawn from his Promise, his Mercy, his Glory, his Son's Merits: and their own Necessities, Experiences, Hopes, and Dependancies. Not thinking so to *Change* Him, But to Excite that *Faith* in him, which their Prayers are to Lean upon. As Prayer, *reciprocally*, stirs up and Enflames our Faith: When we eye the Promises of God, and take the *Boldness* to ask, all that he has the *Goodness* to Promise. *Remember thy Word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to Hope.* Psal 119. 45. And to put the God of Truth in mind of his Promise: To spread before him (the *Chirographum*) his own Handwriting, How Powerful must it be to Prevail with him? As *Melancthon* said of *Luther*, He over-heard him at his private Prayers, as if he had had some body to discourse withal, in the Room with him. And as *S. Chrysostom* observes of the woman, Mat. 15. 27. (φιλαποφεῖ ἡ γυνὴ) The poor woman turn'd Philosopher, to Dispute the mercy out of Christ's hands: *Truth Lord,*

yet the dogs eat the Crumbs that fall from their Masters Table. Thus the Violent take the Kingdom of Heaven by Force: By such Striving in Prayer, and improving all the advantageous seasons of Address: Putting on so far, till some may count them *Rude* and *Sawcy*, That they may not fail to *Speed*, for sparing to *Speak*. Tell

*Christian Con-
sol.* p. 128.

not the troubled heart of Modesty,
'Tis a Complement it will not be tyed
to: (said the Bishop of ours that

was called a second *Chrysostom*, for his Golden sayings:) *The Passions of an Afflicted Spirit are not in good compass, till carried beyond ordinary Rule and fashion.* Vehemence of Zeal will Break out, and Transport the devout Soul so far, as a cold Heart will think *Unseemly*. As *Gehazi* would have thrust away the Mournful *Shunamite*, for her Rudeness, 2 Kings 4. When she ran and catch'd the *Prophet* by the Feet: But he excus'd for her, *verse 27. Let her alone, for her Soul is vexed in her.* When we are upon the Stretch in Prayer, As *Elias* strain'd himself, (*περοδύχη περινέζατο*) Jam. 5. 17. This is the *Vis Deo grata*. Tertul. Such a *Forsible Attempt* upon our Lord, As he will not Chide us for. And so does the Almighty *God* delight to be *Overcome*, and yield to a Man, To the man, that is such a *Passionate Seeker, Intreating his gracious Favour, with the whole Heart.* And this is the *Resistance* that makes the Devil *Fly*: But he never stirs at the Recital of a few *Live-less* words of course: Nor is at all concerned to

Hinder

Hinder the Prayer, that is no *Praying in the Holy Ghost.*

Indeed it ill beseems them to make so *Bold* in Prayer, who take all *profane Boldness* elsewhere. But it well becomes the *Children of the Kingdom*, who know whom they have *Believed*, to be *Bold in their God*, and *Delight themselves in the Lord*. Not to be *Dragg'd to Prayer*, as their *Drudgery*, which they do only because they *Must*: Nor to hang back, as afraid to speak to their *Father*: But count it *Good for them to Draw nigh to God*: And go to him, as the *Center* of their Rest, and their *Exceeding Joy*. Taking his Service for *Perfect Freedom*, *A Labour of Love*, *A sweet Heavenly Imployment*, and a matter of the *chiefest Delight*.

Now that we are not clogg'd with costly *Sacrifices*, and an intolerable *Toke* of Ceremonies, as of old: But somewhat that costs us a great deal *Less*, will be much Better taken: And nothing now indeed is asked, but what is *Cheap* to be given: Nothing imposed, but what we may make *Pleasant* to be performed: Under this *Gospel-Dispensation*, we should have a *Gospel Spirit*, Rejoycing in the Service of our *Lord*, who hath *Pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants*. While others lye without, Estranged from Him, And are only *Troubled*, whenever they *Remember Him*: His *Children* Thirst after him, Run to him, and find sweet Welcome with him. At this *Retreat* they turn in, and under the *Shadow of his Wings* are Safe and Quiet,

Easy and Comfortable, whatever happens. And whoever shuns, or objects against the Service, All the world shall not put them out of Conceit with that, in which they have found such *Heavenly Satisfaction*. They will rather be driven out of the *World*, than out of their *Prayers*. (As *Daniel* would Venture being cast into the *Lyons Den*, rather than forbear to Pray and make Supplication before his *God*: Counting it a more Material point to Secure his *Prayers*, than to Save his *Life*.) For that they have never such Joys as on their *Knees*, And their *Prayer-Times* are the sweetest Times of their lives: When *Heaven* is *Opened* to them, and all the *Goodness* of the *Lord* passes before them, And they are not so Dazzled at his *Glory*, but they see the *Joy* of his *Salvation*: See his *Face* with *Joy*, And find him *Favourable* to them, *Praying* to *Him*. Job. 33. 26. And feel then what they desire might be continually Felt, Themselve^{q.} lost in an infinite Ocean of Sweetness.

Softness, and Peace, and Joy, and Love, and Bliss,
Exalted Manna, Gladness of the best.

How should I praise thee Lord! How should my
Gladly engrave thy Love in Steel, (Rhime)
If what my Soul doth feel sometimes,
My Soul might ever feel.

Of what an easy quick Access
My Blessed Lord art thou! How suddenly
May our Requests thy Ears invade!
To shew that State dislikes not easiness.

Herb

No

No great Man so *Easy* to be spoke to, and dealt with, as the *Great God*. We may tell him all, and pour out our very *Hearts* before him, As we would into the Bosom of our most Dear and Intimate *Friend*. And if our *Heart condemn us not*, for *Regarding Iniquity in it*, Then have we *Confidence towards God*, and a great *Liberty* of speaking, when not checkt with the Conscience of *Allowed Guilt*. Yea tho' we know our selves to be *Sinful*, Yet may we hope in Him, with whom is *Plenteous Redemption*, To give us both *Pardon* of our *Sins*, and *Grace* to save us from them. And we are not to confess them to Him, as to an *Inexorable Judge*, but the *Best of Fathers*, Who knows our *Frame*, and makes merciful *Allowance* for our *Frailty*. And what is the *Saviour* for, but to help out *Sinners*? And why does he bid us pray every day, *Forgive us our Trespasses*, But because he knows we still Need, and he is as forward to *Grant* that *Forgiveness*? If we were not *Heavy-Laden*, we were not called to come to Him for *Rest*. It eases the *Heavy heart*, but to *Pour it out*, Especially to Him, who hath not only a *Heart* to pity us, but all Power in his Hands to Relieve us. *Be careful for nothing, then*, But in every thing by *Prayer* and *Supplication*, with *Thanksgiving*, Let your *Requests* be made known unto God: And the *Peace of God* which passeth all *understanding*, shall keep your hearts and minds thro' *Christ Jesus*. Phil. 4. 6. 7. Even when we are under his *Correction*, 'Tis child-like still to Hanker

after him, as a *Father*: And not leave off, but follow him even with our *Broken* performances, when we are not able for Better Service. Tho' he seems *Angry* at our *Prayers*, 'Tis the more *Acceptable*, when we will after him, even struggling under our *Load*. For little thanks to go on, when Brib'd, as it were, with the *sweets* of Devotion, as our *Pay* in hand. And tho' we are sometimes more dry and Barren, It will be never the worse for us, when it teacheth us that *Humility* and *Submission*, which may be better to us than the *Joy* and *Chearfulness*. No *Dulness* and *Distractions*, *Involuntary* and *Bewailed*, shall ever be Imputed. But God may *Accept* us, even when we *Loath* our selves. For he regards not the *Blemishes* of their *Services*, who are in *Christ Jesus*, and offer the *Best* they have. But looks on what they *Desire* to do, and what his *Son* has done, to fill up all that is wanting in them: And then their *Willing minds*, United to his Compleat *Righteousness*, are such *Sacrifices* wherein God is *Well pleased*. For the *Mediator's* sake, he Pardons our *Worst*, and Accepts our *Best*, Tho' even the *Best* be such as has need of *Pardon*. He will *Spare us as a man spares his own Son that serveth him*. And knowing our *Indigence*, He expects not that we should come to him as *Purchasers*, but as *Beggars*. Not to bring water to the *Fountain*, but only an *Empty Kessel*, And come because we are *Athirst*: Yea take the *Water of Life* freely. Rev. 22. 17 Receiving at his hands, not because we are *Worthy*, but

but because we are *Needy*, And boast not, with the *Pharisee*, how well we are provided, But bewail our Misery to incline his Pity. He knows we are Faulty, even in the *Confessing* of our Faults, And that our very *Praying* for Pardon has need of his *Pardon*: But he allows for Frailties, and has *Compassion on our Infirmitie*s. When therefore we Serve him *Sincerely*, we may do it *Chearfully*, Thô it be (God knows) very imperfectly.

Let us then, in no wise, be tempted to leave off: But, as our Blessed Saviour himself encourages, *Pray always, and not faint*. Believing we shall have what we Ask, Or that which shall be as Good, or Better. And he is not *Crossed*, or he meets with a Happy *Cross*, who gets more than he asked. We shall sure be the *Better* for our Prayers, If but to keep up our *Correspondence* with Heaven. For as Friends are apt to grow shy and strange, for want of Visits and *Intercourse*: So we shall contract a sad *Strangeness* between God and our Souls, by the *Neglect* of our Prayers. But the oftener we go to Him, and the More we are taken up with Him, The greater Interest and Assurance shall we get, And can make the *Bolder*, upon all occasions, to speak for our selves and others. With what Confidence do we go to an able and old *Tried Friend*, of whose Kindness we have had frequent Experience, and who never shews weary of us, but still calls upon us, to come to him, and make use of him?

It

It is a high and wonderful Strain, *Isa. 45. 11.*
 (If it be a *Grant*, and not a *Check* : If it be an
 Encouragement, and not a Correction of *Bold-
 ness*.) *Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Is-
 rael, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come con-
 cerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my
 hands, Command ye me.* As some translate and
 point it with an *Interrogative* note, 'Tis, Will
 you offer so to take upon you, as to *Prescribe* to
 me? (which sense indeed the foregoing Verse
 seems to favour.) But in the common Rending
 and pointing, It is a *Permission* and allowance
 from God himself to his people, To require at
 his hands, what they would have : *i.e.* To sig-
 nify their minds, (for taking it thus, we must
 suppose a *Catachresis* in it :) and to ask of him
 with as much *Confidence*, as of those whom they
 have *power* to *Command*. Or (as Bishop *Wilkins*
 glosses upon it,) In your asking of me, you may
 be as sure of Success, as of the things which are
 in your own Power to *Command*.

O infinite Condescension in Him, who *Hum-
 bles himself even to Behold the things that are in
 Heaven*, When he will so vouchsafe to take No-
 tice of poor Worms at his *Footstool* on Earth !
 With what Courage and Comfort and mighty
 expectation, may we go to the *God of all Grace*,
 who hath erected a *Throne of Grace*, on purpose
 for us to Repair to, who are *Cast* at the Tribu-
 nal of Justice? And ordained his own Son, the
 most prevailing *Master of Requests*, to Sollicite
 for us, and make our unworthy Prayers as Cur-
 rent

rent and *Authentick* even as the most just and powerful Commands.

S E C T. II.

The Liberty of Using the Voice or not.

Prayer is the proper work of the *Heart*, Lifting up itself, and presenting its Desires to the Lord. It is only the *Heart* that *Prays*, The *Mouth* can but *Say Prayers*. And, as many *Words* of Prayer may be spoken, by one that doth not Pray at all: So another may (*Tacendo clamare*) Pray heartily and effectually, who yet says never a Word. *Words*, let them be never so Apposite and pithy, are not Prayer, but only the *Vehicle* of Prayer, and the outward Signification of our minds. 'Tis all one to Him who *searcheth Hearts*, and knoweth the *Meaning* of the Spirit, Whether we send up to him our *Naked Desires*, or *Cloathed* with Expressions. He that Hears us without *Ears*, Understands us without our *Words*: and needs not our *Voices* to tell him what we would have. It is at our own Choice then, Whether we will use our *Tongues* or no, every time we make our Prayers. If we have the *Spirit of Supplications*, we may offer up the *Mental Prayer*, and hold our peace. *i. e.* Humbly bethinking our selves of our Wants, and earnestly craving and waiting for Supply from Above. As *Hannah spake in her Heart, only her Lips moved, but her Voice was not heard,*

1 Sam.

1 Sam. i. 13. The Desires of the Heart are sometimes too *Big* to come out of the Mouth. And then we pray more by *Sighs and Groans*, than by Speech and Phrases. And so, (as Bishop *Hall* speaks) *Our Silence may be more Devout than our Noise*. And to this sort of Prayer, no Book or Learning, no Invention or Utterance are requisite. They that cannot *Indite*, nor so much as *Read*, or well Express themselves, Yet can *Think* what most *Troubles* them, and *Ruminate* on their Wants and Grievances: And they can also *Think* what they would be most glad to *have*, And raise up their Hearts in *Wishes* and Longings and desires of help and Relief, at the hands of God. And they can also *Bethink themselves* of any others that are more *Wretched*, and worse than themselves, And let their Souls then *Bless the Lord*, for all happy Respects, in which he hath made them to *Differ*. And all this seriously and devoutly managed, with the Soul, and *all Within us*, is good Praying, *tho not a word said*. And in such Offices, we are only concerned, to inspect our *Hearts*, and look to the *Frame* they are in, And need not the usual *Vigilance*, to take care that there be a good *Agreement* between them and our *Tongues*, And that these run not on before or without the other, to draw nigh to God with our *Lips*, when our *Hearts* are far from him.

But (if I shall speak my own thoughts and experience) I take this way of Prayer, among most men, to be more fine in *Speculation* than useful

useful in Practice. I only mention the *Liberty* which they have to Use it, who can make any thing of it, and find it available to answere the Ends of Prayer. But as *Words* are of great and continual Use to express our Thoughts, So I cannot but think them as useful to Fix our minds, and Affect our hearts, To Enflame our desires, to regulate our devotion, and to Engage all our Faculties to a due Attendance on the Work we are about. That it may not be a thin *Notional* Busines, Too *Spiritual* for us to perceive it, Or too *Nice* and difficult for us to discern when it is at a *Stand*, or how it *Proceeds*. And as long as we have the Use of *Tongues*, Why should not he that Made them, have them Employed in his Service? We are not only to *Think* Prayers, but to *Open our Lips, that our Mouths may shew forth his Praise.* Psal. 141. 1. *I cried to the Lord with my Voice, with my Voice to the Lord did I make my Supplication.* He that is to Hear, teacheth us what to Say, *When ye Pray, Say, Our Father, &c.* Hos. 14. 2. *Take with you Words, and turn to the Lord, And say to him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the Calves of our Lips.* (The only *Fatlings* which we are now to offer.) If Words be needful to Digest our Thoughts, and shape the *Ideas* that arise out of our Minds, If they make us more Sensible of the things which we Conceive, And a *Happy Expression* that exactly fits our Meaning gives such a *Pleasure*, as the Joy of a *New-born Child*: Then in our Ad-
dresses

dresses to God, where we have need of all Helps, where we ought to have the Livelieſt ſenſe, and our Dulneſſe wants to be Excited by *Pathetick* words, and all Quickening means: We may find it very adyantageous to the Service, to form our Notions into agreeable Exprefſions: Yea thô we are by our ſelves, Yet to ſpeak in our *Own Hearing*, ſuch Words of Prayer, as we find conducing to Compoſe our thoughts, and ſet our Affections afloat, and make us in Earnest upon it, *Feruent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*

Here then, where we are under no Limitation, but left to ourſelves, Whether we will, at all times, *Think or Speak* our Prayers, Our care muſt be, to take that way, which helps us to perform our offices Beſt, and makes us moſt Sincere, and Lively, Zealous and Devout. That we may do all *Heartily, as to the Lord, and Ap- prove* ourſelves unto God, In being curious to Examine and Discern what is Beſt; and Conſcientious to *Hold in* words, or *Pour them out*, thereaſter as we find them to Help, or elſe Hind- der us in the Service.

S E C T. III.

The Liberty to Use Long Prayers or Short.

Length or Brevity are ſuch Indifferencies as do not enter the *Effence* of Prayer. For either of them may be Good or Bad, thereaſter as they are *Designed and Used*. A Short Prayer, made

made so through dislike and *Weariness* of God's Service : And a *Long* one stretch'd out in Pride and *Offentation* of Parts, or *Affection* to be *Tedious*, that we may be thought more *Pious*, are both of them, equally *Abomination to the Lord*. But when we *Contract* our Prayers, that we may strengthen our *Devotion*, and cut them *Shorter*, to make them the *Livelier* : Such *Short Prayers* shall prove long enough to reach to *Heaven* : And so we Pray much, thô we say but Little. And again, when we Enlarge our Prayers, as we find our Hearts *Enlarged*, Our Attention and Affection keeping pace with our Matter and Expressions, we need not fear the guilt of that *Much-Speaking*, condemned, *Matth. 6. 7.* Nor of the *Long Prayers*, *Chap. 23. 14.* made a *Pretence* to *Eat up the Widows*. When the *Spirit of God Moves on the face of the Waters*, to raise up a full *Tide* of Affections in our Souls, We have a *Call* and *Invitation* then to be more *Free* and *Full* in pouring out our Hearts before the Lord. And at Lower *Ebbs*, we must take up with ordinary Offices. No matter how *Short* is the *Cold* and *Dull Prayer*, But that which is *Faithful* and *Fervent* can hardly be too *Long*. *He that says nothing as he ought, is long, thô he pronounce but Two syllables : But he that speaks to the purpose, is not Long, thô he speak Much, and for a Great while together.* (*Philemon, quoted by Grotius.*) The Shortest Prayer is too *Long*, that is (*Vox & prateres nihil :*) Nothing but an *Empty Sound*. But the *Longest* is *Short enough*, where the

the Mind and Heart hold out to the End, and the *Devotion* is as Long as the Supplication. As when we are Cold, we may get us Heat by *Exercise*, So by *Continuance* in Prayer, we may *Warm* our selves into more Devotion: And from *Fluttering* along the ground, find our selves carried up at last, as high as *Heaven*. Some are too Nimble in their *Frisking* Prayers, and in too much *Hast to Speed*. They come to God's *Door*, But they will not *Stay* and *Wait*, and so go away without their *Errand*. The *Striving* with our selves in Prayer, to bring our Hearts into better Frame, is our *Wrestling* to Prevail with God. So we *Preach* to our selves in His Hearing, Not to *Inform* Him, but to *Edify* our selves. And when *Repetitions* flow from Heat of affections, we have Scripture instances, that not only *Allow*, but *Approve* them. Tho' when dull and Heartless, resulting from a *Fictitious Sanctity*, or opinion, to be heard the sooner for *Much speaking*, They are but the *Sacrifice of Fools*, which we are forbid to offer: And must not Roll in such Multiplication of Expressions, to *Wire-draw* Devotion, and think to make out in *Length*, what is wanting in *Heat* and *Weight*.

Pag. 198. 'Tis a good Rule of the Dr. *Let a man Contract his Expressions, where he cannot enlarge his affection; That he may not hold on speaking, when he has done Praying.* But then where his Affections do Grow upon him in the Use of Words, sure he is not obliged to leave off, because Solomon says,

says, *Let thy words be Few*, Eccles. 5. 2. Some may think he mistook his Text, who from hence took occasion to make an *Encomium* of the Large Service of the *Church*, and those Prayers, which he owns to be *near an Hour Long*.

And that is, I think, more than Pag. 214. half an Hour Longer than ever I heard any other. The Discourse to some, may look like a *Libel* upon our *Liturgy*. And if all *Tantology* were *Battology*, *Common-Prayer* it self then must fall under the *Common Condemnation*. Some are weary in the very *Beginning* of their *Prayers*, And others can hold out well even to the *Last*, and find the *Fire* still more *Enflamed*, by more *Blowing*. Else what should they do, e're the *First* and *Second Service* were at an end?

Tho' the *Liturgy* hath Variety, and is (as he calls it) *A String of Pearls*: Pag. 209. Yet if the String should be too *Long*, it would spoil much of his Reasoning. And if the frequent *Breaks* and *Pauses* be the main Commendation, Then who can sufficiently admire the *Popish Service*, and all their multiplied *Collects*, *Responds*, *Jesu's*, *Ave's*, and *Pater Noster's*? But he Pag. 211. says, *The people so share in the Service, it is almost impossible, they should be idle Hearers, or meer Lookers on*. Indeed it's possible they may be Neither: *i. e.* if they chance to fall asleep at the Service: Nor is it quite impossible they may be both, and yet *Parrot* over the words, *As wanton children and some Merry*

Griggs, like they were bearing their Part in another kind of Action, and shew a very *Comical* sort of Devotion. Tho' it's true, Their indecent Carriage doth not reflect any real Dispragement on the *Offices* themselves, to make them ever the worse: Which, under the management of true Zealous Worshippers, do shew quite another *Face*: And there such *Interlocution*, and *Alternate* catching the Words of Prayer, helps and Refreshes each others Devotion, and is like a pious *Contest* and struggle between them, which of 'em shall be most *Earnest* in the Service of their *Lord*.

But I think he might have left out the
 [*Always*] when he said, that *Much*
 Pag. 176. --7. *Speaking is the effect of Confidence:*
And Confidence springs from the per-
suasion that a man bath of his own Worth. For
 a man may Speak *Much*, and yet *Distrust*
 himself: Or he may speak in *Confidence* of a
Better Worth than his *Own*. Yea there may be
 more *Impudence* in a Few words than in Ma-
 ny; according as they are. Our *Grand Exem-*
plar Continued *All Night* in Prayer: And tho'
 he were so much more *Able* to manage it, than
 we, Yet from the drift of the *Doctor's* reason-
 ings, It must be *Impertinent to use so many*
words with God, in a Long-winded Harangue.

I confess the *Long Grace* looks not Seasonable, when a man is *ready to Starve*: And at a sud-
 den Pinch or danger, *Lord Save me*, is a good
 Prayer. But when he has more Time, sure it
 is

is not his Fault to Pray Longer. The *Lord's Prayer*, it's true, is short : But are we Confined just to those very words ? Then why doth the *Church* so much enlarge in other ? And the thing that is done, and may Lawfully be done, why should any *Son of the Church* argue so much against it ? What Inconveniences foever may attend Long Prayers, I cannot think it Convenient to go and prove or insinuate, That it is *Silly* or *Wicked* ever to use them.

To say, *That the whole heart and soul may be wrapt up in three or four words*, And to tell the Success of an *Ejaculation*, that *Cleans'd the Leper, Enlightned the Blind, Justified the Publican* : And then add, *I never yet heard or read of any Long Prayer that did so much* ; is a Reflection that I would forbear, if but for the Credit of that *Church* whereof I am a Member, which prescribes *Longer Prayers*, than ever I us'd of my own, or ever heard any one else use. So that there are some besides *Heathens* and *Phanaticks*, in this Horrid Guilt of *Long Praying*. And to make the *Long Robes and Long Prayers, A Cover for all*, and affirm, *That they who are like the Pharisees for Long Prayers, are like them for somewhat else*, does but give the Brethren in *Querpo* an occasion for Retort and Drollery upon some very *Canonical* men.

Pag. 179.

According to his fine Argumentation, If a Short Petition be a *Panegyrick* on the Great man's parts, to whom 'tis offered, Then the Shortest Prayer that can be made does the greatest *Honor* to God; and if it should be any longer, it would but *Dishonour* him. Nay if *A Word to the Wise*, then *Half a Word to the Only Wise God*, might be enough: Yea, for matter of *Informing* him, None at all. But indeed our Words are neither

Pag. 180.

to *Inform*, nor to *Persuade*, nor to *Weary* and *Overcome* him. Tho' the Dr. says, *They must of Necessity be to one of these three purposes*. Yet himself, soon after, finds another Use for them, when he surprizingly tells us, *That the*

Pag. 188.

proper use of Words, whenever we speak to God in Prayer, is thereby to pay him Honour and Obedience. It seems then that they *Honour* and *Dishonour* him. But he hath not told us, just how Many words will Honour, and how Many will *Dishonour* Him.

Pag. 214.

He speaks of *Praying near an Hour together*, And yet doth not complain of that for *Dishonouring God*, but rather commends it for *Rational Devotion*. So that now, It is not the *Heap* and *Number*, but the *Kind* and *Manner* of the Words, that is *Offensive*. Which Indeed I think comes nearest the truth. And if there be yet another Use of words, (besides *Informing*, *Persuading*, and *Wearying* of God,) which he acquaints us with,

(pag.

(pag. 189.) viz. *To acknowledge and own those Wants before him, that we Supplicate for a Relief of*: He might have done well to tell us, Why that *Acknowledgment* must needs still be made in *Few words*. For I take not that for any Reason which he alledges, pag. 188.

That God has no where commanded us

to Call upon him with Multiplicity and Prolixity of words: Because I neither find, that he has commanded us to call upon him only with *Brevity* and *Paucity* of words. For that all *Long Prayers* are not forbidden, even in *Eccles. 5. 2*. The Dr. himself seems agreed with other Expositors, when he praises the Churches Praying for *Near an hour together*. Which he knows cannot be performed without *Abundance of Words*; Nor are the Words of our *Common-Prayer* ever the Fewer, notwithstanding all the *Fractions* and *Amen's*, how Numerous soever. And tho' we must avoid the *Needless Multiplication* of words, Yet we are bid, *Continue in Prayer*. *Col. 4. 2*. And instead of *Opening the Scriptures*, we should only set *Texts together by the Ears*, If all were of the same Fierce *Pugnacious Spirit*, as some of the *Polemical Champions*.

But it is too obvious to see, How men of most Persuasions, can make *Sins* and *Duties* of such things as God did never make so. Tho' the Scripture Charge is, *To stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us Free. Gal. 5. 1*. And, for any reasons that ever I saw to the contrary, All men have the Freedom to *Shorten or Lengthen*

their Prayers, as themselves do find most con-
ducting to promote the purposes of Piety and
Devotion. And I cannot think that any Good
man doth Wickedly, in taking his Liberty, to
use a *Short* or a *Long* Prayer: When his Design
is *Pious* in both: And he is for serving God af-
ter the Best manner that he Understands. If
some like not his *Way*, Others may as much
mislike *Theirs*. And it is not so much matter,
what Judgment we pass upon one another, as
how we are all concerned to Approve our selves
unto Him that *Searcheth our hearts*.

For my share, I am only for defending the
Christian Liberty, in this, as in the other Points.
And I need not much plead for that, which I
do seldom or never Use of my own Production.
For I do not find that I am able for such *Long*
Prayers: And I dare not be *Tedious*, for fear of
making the Worse work of it. Nor do I think
that I am bound to *Task* my self above my
strength, and go Halting in *Chains* of my own
making: Nor will I be so enslaved to any ones
Expectations, as to engage in more duty than I
can well deal with. But for all this, at such
times when ever I find my self disposed, and
Sufficient for Longer attendance upon the Lord,

I am resolved, No Doctors opinion
Pag. 196. *shall Hinder me from it. Tho' he*
says, That No man begins, and
ends a Journey, with the same Pace. Yet I know
not what Some men can do. And when I find,
That in the Progress of my Prayer, I can do as
well

well as in the *Beginning*: And that I am not *Tired*, but rather Refresht with this *Journey*, Perceiving new Strength, and more Encouragements, as I proceed: I do not think I am bound to leave off, assoon as another may Judge fit. Tho' if my Spirits were spent, and my Activity *flagg'd*, I should count it best to have done, and not force things, with further Attempts upon that, which I did but spoil in the doing. However, if the thing at all has been, or ever may be, of good Service, I cannot reckon the *Abuse* any Argument against the *Use*. For at that rate, *Long Gowns* as well as *Long Prayers*, must be turn'd out of the *Church*; Because both of them have been shamefully *Abused*.

But let no Tender Christian be terrified, with any ones *Dogmatical* Sayings, To think it a Sin, sometimes to cut his Prayers *Shorter*, and sometimes, (as occasion serves,) to draw them out *Longer*: When there is no *Divine Prescription* to determine, just how Long, or how short they shall be. But that is left to our selves, As *Discretion*, grounded on our own *Experience*, shall direct. Provided we *Impose* not upon others, to give any just offence, and make the Service *Contemptible* or *Nauseous*, We have a *Latitude*, to Abbreviate, or Extend our Prayers, as we think *Convenient*. And according to the *Frame* that we are in, and the *Assistance* that God is pleased to Afford, We may Pray a *Little while*, and yet do ver-ry well: Or we may Pray a *Great While*, and yet do as well, or Better. *Assuming* men may Pre-
D 4 scribe

scribe or Limit, after their own *Humour* : But I know not where *God* hath said, as to our Prayers, *Hitherto shall ye go, and no further.*

S E C T. IV.

The Liberty of using Plain words or Elegant.

I take the Stile of *Scripture*, to be the best Stile for *Prayer*. For who can speak better, than the *Spirit that Helpeth our Infirmitie*s? And what more Acceptable *Words*, wherewithal to go unto *God*, than those of his own *Spirit's* Inditing? And if the Sacred Writers spake as they were *Moved by the Holy Ghost*, It seems then that He who is called *The Spirit of Supplications*, hath also put *Words* into our Mouths; and we are to take them, as in the *Bible* we find them. Seeing our Praying to *God*, is but Pleading with him the Promises of his own *Word*, And begging *Strength* to perform the Duties there taught and enjoyn'd. Tho' a certain *Dr. Girds*

at this way of Praying, Because
some have been used to *Gird at the
Government, in Scripture Phrase*:

Pag. 159. I could tell him of some that can *Gird* as much at the *Government* now, *in other Phrase*. But seeing it is not certain, That the *Holy Ghost* did Dictate all the very *Words*, as well as Reveal the *Matter* of the *Holy Scripture*, I cannot think that we are tied just to the *Words* there found:

But

But may speak in those *Phrases*, or take Liberty sometimes to *Vary*, as Prudence shall suggest. And when we Express our own sense, in our own Words, The more *Easy* and *Natural* they are, they seem the more proper for *Prayer*. Because it is the *Child* *ens* speaking to their *Father*, Who is not so much moved with their *Wit* and *starch'd Oratory*, as with their *Wants*, and earnest *Cries* for Help. 'T is not Artificial *Cant*, but *Pathetick Speaking*, which comes warm from the *Heart*, that is likely to be most Prevailing ; Especially with our *Heavenly Father*, Who is not to be wrought upon with *Kheterick*, or any arts of Persuasion, But calls for the *Heart*, which is an Instrument that makes the best *Musick*, in his *Ears*, when it is *Broken*. And *Fineries* of Language look not so Agreeable for *Mourners*, and the *Beggars* which we personate in our Prayers. The plainest *Garb*, that is Decent, best fits the *Former*, And to the *Latter* we are inclinable to give, rather when they appear in *Rags*, than in *Ribbons*. *Jingles* and *Quibbles* are fitter to be us'd in *Playing*, than in *Praying*. And it gives suspition, that we rather *Play* with our Prayers, than pour them out from a heart Sensible of our *Wants* and *Distresses*, When we can be so *Gay* and *Flourishing*, and vary *phrases* to set off our Abilities ; The use of our Words in *Prayer*, being rather to *Affect* our selves, than to *Move* the *Lord*, No matter therefore how Plain they be, so they be Pertinent, and not *Loose* and indecent. For we are not so much *Affected*

Affected with words that are Trim or Hard, as with those that are *Significative* and *Hearthy*. He that knows the *Poverty* of our case, will not reject us, for appearing before him in a Plain homely Dress, Nor *Despise the Prayers of the Humble*, because they are of a course Thread, and not set off with *Laces* and *Fringes*. We may speak our Minds *Down-right to God*, even as we would to our dearest Friend: And not fear a *Repulse*, because our words want a *Flourish*. He speaks Elegantly enough, that speaks but *Intelligibly* and *Affectionately*. And when I *Feel* what I say, and *Say* that which makes others *Understand* and *Sympathize* with me, That is the *Happiness of Expression*, which best answers the Ends of Speech.

But if we think any thing Better than this, we *May* use it: Nay we *should*, Because God is Worthy to be Served with the *Best*. He that cheifly *requires Truth in the Inward parts*, will also be Honour'd with the *Mouth*; And did not give man Eloquence for any thing so much, as to *shew forth his Praise*. 'Tis too Morose, to exclude all Flowers of Language from the *Pulpit* and *Prayer*, because of St. *Paul's Demonstration of the Spirit*, opposed to the *Enticing words of man's Wisdom*. *The Deceiver is cursed, that hath in his Flock a Male, and Vows and Sacrifices to the Lord a Corrupt thing.* Mal. I. 23. *Heart*

Heart and Head too must be at his Service : And the Best member we have must do it's Best for him that gave it. That which is called our *Glory* , must be employed to his *Glory*. And when we speak not in a *Bom-bastick Affectation* , or *Tawdry Phraseology* , but in a becoming *Politeness* , and Awful *Grandiloquence* , such as speaks us Mindful of the *Infinite Majesty* we are before : When the Tongue and Mind are turn'd to an *Uni-son* , and there is *Melody in the Heart* , as well as *Quainteness in the Mouth* , Pleasing to God is that *Eloquence*.

Such as have even a Natural *Facility* and *Felicity* of ingeniously Expressing themselves, need not fear it will create any Prejudice against their Prayers, to speak as *Handsom-ly* to God , as they do to *Men*. Nor think that *Homeliness* must be Peculiar to his Service. But rather Dread to pour out *Crude* indigested stuff , to provoke a *Nauseous Qualm* , and make the *Offering of the Lord to be Abhorred*. And such as are fain to *Stu-dy* for it , before they can attain to the *Bet-ter* way of Expression, yet need not fear , that the *Artificial* , will profane the *Spiritu-al* part , of their Devotion : But may rather take satisfaction in this , That they do not *Serve the Lord their God with that which Costs them Nothing*.

The

The Dr. says well, That where
 Pag. 143-4. God hath given Learning and Ut-
 terance, He will not endure Men
 should be Accurate in their Discourse, and Loose
 in their Devotions: To put off the Author of
 every good and perfect G'ft, with Ramble and
 confused Talk, Babble and Tautology: No-
 thing under the best a man can offer, being fit
 to present to God. Yet I doubt not but the
 man shall be Accepted according to what he
 hath, who strives to be as Accurate here, as
 he is any where else. Thô he cannot ex-
 press himself at the Rhetorical rate of some
 Wits. True indeed, It is not
 Pag. 142. the Simplicity of the Head, but
 of the Heart. Yet God knows
 the most learned Doctor's best weighed words
 to be but Weak and coarse before Heaven.
 And the plainest Speech of any ordinary
 man, that is Sincere and Devout, sounds
 as well with him, as the most Florid Ha-
 ranguer of the greatest Master of Lan-
 guage.

S E C T. V.

The Liberty of using this Posture or that.

THO' Bodily *Exercise* profiteth little, yet as much as the Body is capable of doing, it can no where Better perform, than in his Service who *Framed* it. We are commanded to *Glorify him with our Souls and Bodies both.* And some Bodily *Distance*, helps to bring our Souls *Nearer* to God. The Body is the Servant of a Servant, And it is fit my Servant should serve me, in the Serving of my Lord. He that hath given us Knees and Bodies to *Bow down*, and Hands and Eyes to *Lift up*, instructs us by our very *Frame*, as well as by his *Word*, how we should carry in his *Worship*. The call to Worship, is also to *Fall down and Kneel before the Lord our Maker.* Psal. 95. 6. And (*ωρονυεῖν*) it is to *Crouch* even as a *Spaniel* before his Master. We cannot shew the Inner-man, but by the Outer, which is to tell how things stand *Within*, and by proper Words and Tone, and Gesture and Actions, to profess the *Profound Admiratiōn* we have in our minds, of the glorious Excellencies and infinite Perfections of God. Men that cannot see our *Hearts*, yet take notice of our *Carriage*. And we must dread to *Scandalize* those whom we ought to *Edify*. A little matter here, may give great Offence. And we must not only

Look

Look to our own Hearts, but take heed we do not *stumble* others. Thô we must be so intent upon the Presence of *God*, as little to regard who else is *present* with us at our Prayers, and not let any *Company* Awe or Divert, or Interrupt us, in the *Homage* we are paying to *Him* who is infinitely *Higher* and *Greater* and *Better* than all ; who, coⁿpar'd with *Him*, are no more than mere *Vanity* and *Nothing*. In *Company* we are to Pray, as if there were none but *God* there ; and in *Solitude*, as if the Eyes of all the *World*, as well as *His*, were upon us. For he indeed is *All*, and to *Him* all Persons and things else are as if they *were not* at all.

Yet it is not under pretence of *Spirituality*, to Slight those external *Signs* of Reverence, which are so mighty *Influential*, to raise our own Affections, and to Enflame the Zeal of others. Thô we have that Spirit of *Adoption*, whereby we cry *Abba Father* : Yet even the Child of a *King* may go *Rudely* into his Father's presence. And *Stately* to set us down in the Presence of *God*, as if the glorious *Majesty* so infinitely Above us were to be *Bearded* in a sawcy manner, shews us to be children of such *Manners* as need to be better *Taught* : as if we thought it a *Lessening* of our selves, to use the humblest *Prostrations* before *Him*, at whose Feet all the Worthies of Heaven *Cast their Crowns*, Rev. 4. 10. and whom indeed we can never *Honour*, so much as his service *Honours* us. Let us Consider then, With whom it is, that

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we make so *Bold*, and not forget the *Infinite Disproportion* between us and Him that *Made* us: Nor carry as if we were too *Goodly* to be seen *Cringing* low at his Footstool, or as if we meant it only for a *Complement*, when we call our selves his *Humble servants*.

It is Mockery indeed to Bow the Body at his *Name*, when the Heart never Bends to his *Gospel*. Like those that Bowed the Knee, and cried, *Hail Jesus*, to the Lord of Glory, whom they *Crucified*. Nor is it a *Puppet-Religion* without *Life*, that I contend for: To make our selves such *Anticks* as the *Popish* Worshippers, who had need be *Masters of the Ceremonies*, to hit of that Worship, more like a *Ball* or *Interlude*, than the grave Worship in *Spirit*. And their Religion, as *Ritual* as *Judaism*, clogg'd with Rites as numerous, and more Obscure and useleſs, yea even all Outside and *Pageantry*, and as unlike the *Gospel-Simplicity*, as dumb Shews and idle Formalities can make it, such a *Rate* of words and *Histrionick* gestures, and Superstitious *Fopperies*, which any silly Children, or the vileſt of the people can be as nimble at as the best, and contend more for the Modish forms, than for the Faith *Once delivered to the Saints*: These doings may soon give any *Spiritual Worshipper* Enough of *Popery*, and utterly turn his Heart against that which is so opposite to the design and *Genius* of the *Gospel*. Tho so many can wonder at the outward *Pomp*, without the inward *Life*, and cry *The Temple of the Lord*,

Lord, when they mind no Fellowship with the *Lord of the Temple*: I cannot think it such a mighty Accomplishment, for men to enter those Geers and observe all their postures in the *Ritual Religion*, and shew all their *Metal* for the things least *Required* at their hands

But yet outward *Significations* of Reverence in Worship are not such matters of *Indifference*, as we need not take any *Care* of. For who that has the *Fear of God* in his Heart, can make so Bold with the *Majesty of Heaven*, as if the great God were *Altogether such a one as himself*? To present that to the *Biggest* and *Best* of Beings, Perfect above thought, and Blessed beyond addition, which he would be ashamed to offer even to his poor *Fellow-creature*, an earthly Governor? To be stiff and Haughty, or Whiffling and wanton before the *Throne of God*, To Loll or Yawn over the *Divine Worship*, To sit in State, as those that were Above it, Or to Prate and Laugh, to Gaze about, or be doing some Silly actions, as those that came only to *Slight* and *Affront* it: How fulsome soever it be to see the *Loose Liver* a compleat *Formalist*, Yet who can think well of such a rude *Slovenly Religion*, as does not compose men into a more awful Devout *Behaviour*, in their solemn Addresses to the *Most High God*, whom we should never approach but with all *Humility*, and a becoming *Reverence and godly Fear*, and even *Annihilate* our selves before him?

But

But then for the *Manner* of expressing this Reverence, In our *Secret* Prayers we are left at *Liberty*, to use that Gesture which we find most to Quicken us, and promote the *Duty*. And in *Publick*, our Behaviour must Conform to the usage of the *Church*, with which we have *Communion*. And with *Company* elsewhere, our care must be, so to carry our selves, as to *Express* our own Devotion, and not to Damp, but *Excite* the same in others.

Holy Scripture doth not Limit us to one certain *Posture* of *Prayer*. Thô the most usual, and best approved among all be *Kneeling*. Our great Redeemer himself, *Kneeled down and Prayed*. *Luk. 22. 41.* And that for certain, is the best *Pattern* we can follow. If our Blessed Lord so *Humbled himself*, the Greatest man must not think much to come down so Low.

Kneeling ne're spoil'd Silk Stocking. Herb.

If it hurt the *Finery*, it will make him finer another way. But yet it is not Sinful sometimes, upon occasion, to use another *Gesture*. Not only *Prostration* or Lying along, as *Numb. 11. 25.* Or *Standing*, as *Mar. 11. 25.* (and *Luk. 18. 11.* Even the humble *Publican*, who would not so much as *Lift up his eyes to Heaven*, we find in this Posture.) But even *Sitting*, as *2 Sam. 7. 18.* *King David sate before the Lord*, and Prayed; (as there to the chapters end.) So it is according to our *Translation*;

(Tho some think it denotes rather his *Abode*, than his *Posture*, in Prayer, with whom I list not to contend). But again it is said, 1 Kings 19. 4. *Elijah Sate down under a Juniper tree, and Prayed.* The *Impotent* man then, that is confined to his *Bed* or *Chair*, must not think it will *Spoil* or hinder his *Prayers*, Because he doth not use his *Knees*. And when we are *Walking* in our *Chamber*, or on the *Way*, When *Riding* or *Sitting*, where we cannot *Retire*, and at the same *Instant* find an *Occasion* and *Motion*, to *Lift up our Hearts to God*, We must not withhold *Prayer*, because we want a *Conveniency* for *Kneeling*. But let the *Office* (rather than *Fail*,) be done, for that time, in the *Posture* as we are: And God will hear the *Desire* of the *Humble heart*, tho the *Body* be not *Incurvate* in the usual *Figure*. When I am *By my self*, I will not scruple to *Pray Standing*, or *Walking*, or *Lying*, if I find the *work* go forward in such ways, as well as by *Kneeling*. *Prayers* are not so confined to the *Knees*, but that as I may *Kneel*, and not *Pray*, So I may *Pray* and not *Kneel*. *Contemplation* I account, indeed the *Best*, but not the *Only* *Posture* of *Prayer*.

S E C T. VI.

The Liberty of using a Form or none.

THE Contending Parties in both Extremes I think to be *Mistaken*: Such as will allow of no *Forms* of Prayer at all, And such as plead for *Forms Alone*, and will not Endure any other way of Praying. They that are against *Forms*, *as such*, must reject the Prayer of the Lord himself, *That Breviary of the Gospel*, as *Tertullian* calls it. A Prayer so *Comprehensive* and *Copious*, as well as *Compendious*, that tho we may Enlarge upon it, we cannot ask *More* than is included in it. A *Prayer* which few *Sects* of Christians have been so wild, as to leave out of their *Offices*. Tho we are not bound *Always* to use it, yet still to Pray after the *Manner* as it prescribes, *Mat. 6. 9.* And who can we think so fit to instruct us, How *God* should be Prayed to, and *Man* prayed for, as he who was Himself both *God and Man*? I am never more Easy and free from a troublesome Concern about the Words of Prayer, than when I am making use of the *Lord's-Prayer*. And they that find fault with it, as it is a *Form*, may for the same reason quarrel all the Scriptures, for being a *Form of Sound words*. Nay they may as well reject every *Conceived Prayer*, which is indeed as much a *Form* to the *Hearers*, as if it had been penn'd or printed, and then Repeat-

ed. Yea I may know *That* to be a real *Form*, composed by my self, which some others take for an *Extempore Effusion*. And so it may be only *Ignorance* in them, which makes it Acceptable with them, Because they take it not to be *Prepared* by me, but to flow immediately from the *Spirit* in me. But to think that all *Set Forms* are opposed to Prayer by the *Spirit*, is such an opinion of *Praying by the Spirit*, as I cannot comprehend. No Praying indeed is true and right, that is not *Supplication in the Spirit*, i. e. Through the Help of the *Spirit of God*. But I see not why it may not be *such*, as well with, as without a *Form*. Nor is the *Spirit Limited* by such Forms, Wheras indeed the *Enlargement* of the Heart stands not so much in the Copiousness and variety of *Expressions*, as in the extent and Elevation of the *Affections*. A Carnal man may have a *Fluency* of good Words, But only the Child of God abounds with holy and heavenly *Desires*. And those desires I may express in Others words, or in my own: *Premeditated*, or *Immediately formed*: without *Stinting* of the *Spirit* either way. The one may do as well as the other: No matter which I take, So that I do it pertinently, and affectionately. For Words are but the *Carkass* of Prayer, The Soul and Spirit lies *within*. And the *Searcher of hearts* regards not so much, how it is *Drest*, as from what *Heart* it proceeds, and how *Earnest* and *Devout* it is. My words are not to Move Him, but my self: Not to pull the *Bank* to me, but

but to bring my *Vessel* to the Shore. And so I may use such words, as I find fitteſt to Enflame my affeſtions, that I may stand rightly diſpoſed to receive his Mercies. Whether I pray in a *Book*, or without, is the ſmalleft matter to Him: So that I Pray at all *indeed*, And when I uſe the *Book*, am not *Lazy* and *Formal*, And when I uſe none, am not *Rude* and *Proud*, but ſtill *Humble* and *Hearty*. To *Pray*, is a great deal more than *Saying* of Prayers. There may be all the *Words*, without any thing of the *Spirit* of Prayer. Whether I ſpeak out of the *Book*, or out of my *Memory*, I may draw nigh to God only with my *Lips*: Or I may ſo manage my Prayer, as to have it *Sincere* and *Effectual*, ei-ther way.

But when ſo little is done by the moſt at Prayer, and ſuſh multitudes do live *Prayerleſs*, not Calling upon the Lord at all, Little need to perplex the thing; or *Affright* any from the *Throne of Grace*, Because they deliver not their minds juſt in our *Rote* of words. To diſgrace *Book Prayers*, may be the way to diſcourage the moſt from all Prayer. If they muſt have no *Forms*, they could (it may be) make nothing of it; but *Ramble* and *Babble*, Trusting only to their own *Abilities*. I think we ought rather to *Hearten* men on, if they *Own* God in any way of ſerious Worſhip, with *Book*, or without. For 'tis according to what a man hath, that God *Accepteth* him. And he ſtands not ſo much upon a poor Christian's *Wording* of his Prayers,

When he sees his *Spirit Engaged*, and that he offers the *Best* he has, doing all *Heartily*, *as in the Sight of God*. We make a mighty matter, as to the way of some mens *Wording* things, so much Better than others. But alas, what a small thing is this in the *Esteem of God*? who *Valueth* and *Judgeth* men by somewhat else. The most *Elaborate* and *exact Expressions*, What wretched *Barbarisms* and hideous *Jargon* would they be found, if severely *Criticiz'd* upon by *Infinite Perfection*? And wo be to the best *Speaker* in the World, if he should not be *Heard* and *Accepted*, on any other account, but only for the sake of his *Words*. For how can a mouth-full of frail *Breath* (tho *Modulated* with never such Art and Advantage) be the *Motive* of all God's *Mercy*, and Man's *Salvation*?

As much *Stress* as ever some are pleas'd to lay upon it, 'Twill not be so much enquir'd after in the great Day of Accounts, How we used to *Express* ourselves in our *Prayers*: As how our *Hearts* stood *Affected* to the Service. And then the *Holy Livers* shall be found beforehand with the *Fineſt Speakers*. And such weakness and Indecence as many a man would not *Pardon*, The *Father of Mercies* will never Mention to them that Follow him, and Delight in him, as *dear Children*.

He equally offends God, and *Prophanes* *Psayer*, who either reads it *Careleſſly* in a Book, or tumbles it *Rudely* out of his *Breast*. But when

when I find that I can be *Devout* in the use of a *Prayer Book*, and that I can Exercise as much *Devotion*, when I have *no Book*, that I can join Profitably and Comfortably with the *Church Prayers*, and with *other Prayers*: I am (*in utramq; paratus*) without Scruple for all Prayer, that is offered with Humility and Zeal to God, thro' *Jesus Christ*, for such things, as in his comprehensive *Platform*, he has directed and encouraged us to pray for.

I will never believe, That an *Earthly Father* can be Kinder than my *Heavenly*. And if my natural *Parent* will take it in good part from me, when I deliver my self to him, *as well as I can*, (Tho' I do not make a *Starched Speech*, or read all out of a *Book*,) can he that *knows our Frame*, and hath *Compassion on our Infirmitie*s, (*Pitying them that fear Him, as a Father pities his children*,) fall out with me, because I have not the *Knack* of Expressing my self, *as well as another*? When he knows I have a *Careful Heart* to Please him, and am for serving him with the *Best*, and do not use my own words, for the high *Opinion* that I have of them, above others, But because another cannot express my wants and desires, so *Agreeably as I can my self*, Who best know where it pinches most, and what I would be most glad to have, And because I am afraid of being a *Slothful Servant*, to Bury any *Talent* in a *Napkin*, that my Lord hath lent me. I would serve him with my Understanding and Memory, and Utterance, and all my faculties, as well as with my Affections: And if my Understan-

ing cannot *vye* with some others, or their Words be Better than mine, Yet I think I am bound also to use my *Own*, and to do according to the *Ability that God hath given me*: Who, I am sure, will not be *Harsh* and *Stern* with the Weak-est of his Children, that shew their *Willingness* and *Endeavours* to please him, thô they cannot do like some of the rest.

I my self feel more Inclination, as I see more Reason, sometimes to give to a Beggar that is a sorry *Faultering Orator*, than to another that speaks Exactly, in *Mood and Figure*. 'Tis not so much his *Fine Words* and *Cadence* as his *Want* and *Misery*, join'd with *Simplicity* and *Humility*, that makes him an *Object of Charity*. And I know, it is not so much for our *Speech* and the *Words of Prayer*, as for our *Hearts*, and the *Spirit of Prayer*, that He regards us, who will be worshipped with our *Souls* and *Spirits*.

We should indeed *Chuse* words to Reason with him: But when we compose somwhat of our *Own*, it speaks our greater *Care* to be Acceptable. And Bishop *Hall* (in his *Devout Soul*)

Pag. 11. tells us, *That a Stammering Suppli-ant may reach to a more eminent De-votion, than he that can deliver him-self in the most fluent and Pathetical forms of Elo-cution*. 'Tis not to rake together a parcel of good Petitions, and seek to give them some Life in the Utterance: unless we *Draw Nigh with a True heart in full Assurance of Faith*. For it it is Faith in God's Promises, that is the Foundation

dation of all our *Prayers*. And Prayer is but *Faith* putting forth itself in a *Flame* of Desires. God hears no impenitent Sinners, that *Regard Iniquity in their hearts*, Let their words be never so fine and *Apposite*. And he rejects no *Humble, Faithful Supplicant*, be his Speech never so weak and *Imperfect*. Tho such be not *Eloquent*, they have words sufficient to do their *Business*. Even *Broken words* will serve the turn, when they come from a *Broken heart*.

When going to Prayer then, I will remember I am going to my *Father*. And tho I know a *Son honours his Father*, and so I will know my Distance, and pay a profound *Veneration*, and Exert the best of my *Abilities* in his Service: Yet while I keep off from the *Uncreaturely Boldness*, I will not run upon the *Unchildlike Strangeness*, To be curb'd with such a *Spirit of Bondage*, that I dare not *Speak* for my self: Nor dejected with a Servile Dread of his lying at catch, to *Trepan* me in my words, if I do not place every one Aright. As if he were so Inconsiderate of my Frailty, or could carry like so *Rigid* an Enemy, to Cast off me, and all my Suit, if there be but the least word knockt out of *Joint*. At this rate, (did I listen to the Teachers of such a *Ghastly Frightful Religion*,) I should make it a more Dangerous thing to *Pray to God*, than to *Keep away*, and never come before Him. But I will never be persuaded, that the *Father of Mercies* has the Spirit of some *Rough and Sowre Doctors*: Who yet can make as

as bold with God in their *Manners*, as they think others do in their *Prayers*: And are not so Strict in *Tutoring* their Neighbours Tongues, but they can be as *Lax* in ordering their Own.

I cannot question in the least, But there have been many and gross *Abuses* of this *Way* of Praying; which, if rak'd together, may furnish out matter enough for *Satyr*, and make abundance of work for any *Doctor*, or other, that has such a *Talent*. And tho Stories seldom lose in the reporting, by such as are known to have a strong *Byas*, Yet let *Commin's Hypocrisy*, and *Weyer's Villany* both pass without Contradiction, That the one could so *Masquerade* it for the *Pope*, and the other *Command* good words, while himself was Commanded by the *Evil Spirit*: And to these Two let Twenty more be added of the same *Stuffing*: 'Twill but prove, what none denies, That there have been Ill men of all *Pretensions*. *Satan himself can be Transformed into an Angel of Light*. And one that was a *Devil* had yet a Name among the Disciples of *Christ*. But let *False Coin* and *Counterfeit Wares* be Detected and Cry'd down: This is no Prejudice at all to that which is *Current*, *right*, and *good*. Nor does my Undertaking oblige me to answer for all the *Cant*, and *Gibberish*, *Jargon* and *Impertinence*, flowing from any shatter'd Heads, or wild Tongues, under pretence of *Exercising* their *Gifts*. Men may Hurt themselves, even with *God's Gifts*, and turn their very Remedy to their Ruin. They may be proud of their

New

New Words, as of New Cloaths. And there may be much more *Pride* than *Devotion* in the case, When we are ashamed to Appear before the *Lord*, unless it be still in a *New Dress*. But if the Abuses must lay an *Embargo* on the Use, I know not what *Prayers* then of any sort will be left us: Or what will become of the *Common Prayer* it self, but it must cease to be *Common*, or to be at all; because many have made as Wretched work with *that*, as ever was made of *Free Prayer*.

But I know some would heavily resent it for a most *Tyrannical* *Imposition*, To be tied up for ever meddling with a *Bottle of Wine*, because it has Happened with so many, That when the *Wine* was in, the *Wit* was out. This *Doctor* is not therefore for Renouncing the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, because he takes that for an *Adulteration*, which another *Doctor* calls a *Vindication* of it. *Holy* things and *Pearls* will sometimes light among *Dogs* and *Swine*. But yet they do not for that, lose their *Nature*. The Things themselves are not a jot the Worse, tho the *Profaners* of them are a great deal. Let those that are *Guilty* answer for that. But why should the *Children of the Kingdom* be turn'd out of their *Privilege*, for the sake of some illegitimate *Interlopers*, that have made *Invasions* upon it? Whither should a *Child* go but to his *Father*? And if he must not speak a Word to him, but what he *Reads* out of a *Form*, Where's the *Ingenuity* and *Freedom* of a *Child*? and the *Bold-*

Boldness at the Throne of Grace? And what advantage then of the *Spirit of Adoption*, above the *Spirit of Bondage*? Sure we may have *Boldness* and *Assurance*, without being *Sawcy* and *Malapert*. And tho it is not for a pitiful *Worm* to think of being *Hail-Fellow* with his *Glorious Maker*: Yet I think it is an untowardly way of *Honouring* my Father, to take him for such a one, that I *Dare not Speak* with him; or if but a word *Amiss*, to think he would not *Hear*, nor *Forgive* me.

Desires are the *Wings* of the Soul, on which it mounts up to Heaven; *Prayer* sets them a working: But where are many *Appendages*, they'll be like but to *Cumber* and *Clog* the Motion, which the more *Natural*, the more *Free* and *Easy*. Tho a *dexterous* Art may help *Nature*, Yet *Grace* added to both, is the best accomplishment, and the *Crown* of all. *Prayer* is *God's Breath in man*. *Herb*. Nothing to be done in this matter, without the *Spirit Helping our Infirmitie*s. And that I take to be what they call *Praying by the Spirit*, (whether with Book or without,) when the good *Spirit of God* gives his gracious *Guidance* and *Affistance*, for the true and zealous performance, tho not an immediate *Inspiration*, to *Dictate* our Prayers. Therefore with all our Prayers, we must still Pray for the *Spirit of Prayer*, that our Prayer may be *Supplication in the Spirit*. And when it is but such, it will have a *Recommendation*, that will help it to find *Acceptance*, tho it be not set out in *Perfection of Stile*. In

In *Private* I am not so curious of my *Words*, but often let my *Expressions* *Follow* my *Affections*. And I may make a *Continued Oration*, or *Break off* and *Pause*, and begin again, as I see occasion.

*They that in Private by themselves alone
Do Pray, may take
What Liberty they please
In chusing of the ways
Wherein to make
Their Souls most intimate Affections known
To Him that sees in Secret, when
Th' are most conceal'd from other men.*

Harv. Po. p. 14:

In such *Retirements* we are out of the reach of any *Momus*, to carp at our *Words*: And free from all *Concern*, but to have our *Hearts Right with God*, who will not take offence at a *Misplaced* or *Improper Word*, When he hath the *Heart Engaged* and *Busy* at work in his *Service*. He calls *That* to draw nigh to him in the first place, let the *Tongue* follow after as it can. And as it's most *Natural*, when our *Mouths* speak *Out of the Abundance of our Hearts*: So a few words that come *Warm* from the *Heart*, are more *Valuable* than *Ten thousand* said after another, or in a *customary Round*:

Sine Monitore, quia de Pectore Oramus. Tertul. We are not *Told* all that we must *Say* in our *Prayers*, because we fetch

Apol. c. 30.

fetch them out of the Bottom of our *Hearts*. And he needs no other *Prompter*, be he never so Weak, that has the *Spirit of God*, himself, for his *Tutor*.

But when I am called to be the *Mouth* of the Company, I must be more *Cautelous*: especially if they be *Captions*, and such as are apt to be *scandalized*, should any thing drop that sounds *Unadvis'd*. 'Tis good then to *Forecast* What to say, and How, in words pertinent and *Becoming*. And when the *Heart Indites a good matter*, the *Tongue will be the Pen of a Ready Writer*. Suitable Expressions are apt to fall in with *Well digested Meditations*.

I confess that which the Dr. alledges may be an Inconvenience of the *Extempore* way, When he that Ministers, hath his *Mind taken up to find out Words*, it looks more like *Studying than Praying*. *Beating the Brain*, when he should be

Drawing out the *Affections*. And I
Pag. 152. heartily Subscribe to his Rule, That

whatever gives the Soul Scope and
Liberty to exercise and employ the hearts Affection
and Devotion, That doth most effectually help and
enlarge the *Spirit of Prayer*. But together with
this, Let it be considered, That some are in
more Concern and *Pain*, to be tied up to Others
Words, than to be at *Liberty* to express them-
selves in their *Own*. Especially when it is sup-
posed, They are such as are Acquainted with
the *Holy Scripture*, and all the *Heads of Prayer*,
and have a *Good Treasure* within them, both of

Mat-

Matter, and fit Phrases to dress it out. And when (as the Dr. expresses it.) *They are not to study Finess, but Decency : Not to Declaim as Orators, but to speak as men.* Therefore, methinks, they may tell their own Tale as well as they can, and not only *Read a Paper* : Think of the Substance and Words too, but not just say a *Lesson*. A Judicious man sure may speak the Sense of his Soul, and not fraught with *Nonsense and Incoherence, Confusion and Impertinence*. Nay tho' *A Child of God may be of so weak Parts, as to shew himself Broken and incoherent, when put upon common Discourse,* (saith Bishop Hopkins Alm. Christ. p. 72.) Yet engage him in *Prayer*, How doth he expatiate and enlarge, and what a Torrent of Divine Rhetorick will he pour into the Bosom of God ?

Yea the Dr. tells us, *That where God hath given Ability, he will be served by acts proportionable to it, and that our Parts ought to be employed in the worship of God that gave them : Or else, not wearing God's Livery in his own Service, we add Sacrilege to Profaness, and Strip and Starve our Devotions.* Now what would he have ? We *Must* use our *Parts*, and we *must Not*. Where God hath furnished a Readiness and pertinence of Expression, Yet must we not dare to Speak for our selves or others ? No not a *Word*, but what is just set down for us on the *Paper* ? Tho' I am not accustomed to the *Sudden Effusions*, (not finding in my self a Sufficiency for that Service,) Yet

Pag. 141.

Pag. 143.

Yet I dare not from hence conclude, That God hath given such *Abilities* to none. And where he hath given them, Must they be Restrained from the Use of them, because I cannot do as they ? And must my *Scantling* be made a Rule to all, and the *Measure* which none must offer to Exceed ?

The Dr. (it should seem,) hath had the opportunities which I have not had, to hear the *Pretenders without Ability*, with their *endless Repetitions, insufferable Nonsense*, and Prayers full of *Ramble and Inconsequence*, which he counts of an *Opiate* nature, to cast one Asleep. The Temptation, I confess, was never set before me.

P. 217. But if it were, I think it would more try the strength of my *Patience*, than my *Ability in Watching*; For I should be too full of *Indignation* to Sleep. But whatever *Extravagancies* have attended the thing, and tho it be the thing which I dare not pretend to be *Master* of my self: Yet for the sake of many of my *Bettters* that have Appeared for it, and been Happy in it, I dare not Decry and run it down, as a *Scandalous and Insufferable practice*: Nor so *Limit the Holy One*, as to conclude, He hath given to none, any more Sufficiency for it, than to my self. But shall even leave it, as I find it in the *Holy Scripture*, Undecided, and at *Liberty*. And as our *Saviour* said in another case, Let them *Receive it, to whom it is given*. But when I see no *Jus Divinum for Forms, or no Forms*, I cannot

cannot but wonder at the *Assuming* Humor of those men, that will take so much upon them, to *Brand* and *Damn* the one or the other, where the Word of God hath not palt the *Sentence* on either.

S E C T. VII.

The Liberty of using One Form or Another.

Seeing God hath not put all the very *Words* in-
to my Mouth, Wherewithal I must *Appear*
before him, I am left to *Chuse* for my self, and may
take words of my own *Contriving* and collecting :
Or such *Prepared* and *Fitted* to my hand, as I find
most conduced to Minister to my *Devotion*. Yet
here I design not to offer any thing tending to
Loosen what *Authority* has Bound : Nor to *Un-*
binge the things that are Settled , as to the *Li-*
turgy and Publick Offices of the Church ; Which
I know not how any can *Calumniate*, without
an ill Reflection on the *Compilers*, who dyed
Martyrs of our Professed Religion , and appro-
ved themselves the greatest enemies to the *Popish*
Superstition. Tho I dare not *Idolize* any Form,
nor make it *Exclusive* of all else, as if there were
no true Worship, but that. I am far from De-
spising what the Dr. calls such a *Treasure of Ra-*
tional Devotion. And I believe many have a
Pique at it , not so much for any *Exceptionable*
things in it , as for the sake of some *Admired*
Persons, whom they hear Speak against it. I

F have

have long since testified my *Affent* and *Consent*, to all that is therein Appointed: To allow it as True, and to Approve it as Good: Or, as Dr. Falkner gives his sense of it, (*Lib. Eccles.* p. 96.) *That it may Warrantably, and with a good Conscience be used.* And I do still Declare for it, as far as it is *Appointed*, i. e. for the *Publick Service of the Church.* But I cannot think my self obliged to Plead for this *Form*, to the Juggling out of all other. When as indeed Other Forms also are Contrived and put into our hands, even by the *Fathers of the Church.* And Dr. Patrick, (now one of our Right Reverend Bishops,) in the Preface of his Book of Devotions for *Families*, thus freely delivers his Opinion, *That the Reverence due to the Common Prayer will be best preserved, by employing it only in the Publick Divine Service; (unless there's a Priest to officiate in Private.)* And that the Design of it, is not to furnish people with Prayers for all those particular Occasions, wherein Devout Souls should make their Requests to God. And he appeals to the constant Opinion of pious Divines, *That other Prayers are Necessary for the Flock of Christ, Besides the Publick Liturgy.* And I observe, that his Grace, the late Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, (Whose Name I cannot mention without some mark of Honour.) Such a rich Perfume his high Deserts have left behind him. Who was upon constant and eminent Service of the *Church*, even all his days: And his most Useful Learning and Happy Pen, flowing with Nervous Sense, in the *East* sicst

fiest Stile, will Oblige the World even as long as it stands,) In his Sermon of *Family-Religion*, makes no mention of the *Common Prayer* for *Family-Worship*: But refers to the *Excellent Helps* for this purpose, for those that stand in Need of them, in the several Books of Devotion, calculated for the *Private use* of Families, as well as for *Secret Prayer* in our *Closets*. Tho' I Criminate none, who discreetly collect out of the *Liturgy*, to use in their Houses, but commend all the Families, where this or any other Offices of God's true Worship, are Reverently and Seriously performed: That I may not be guilty of the *Imposing Humour*, which I censure. (*Hanc Veniam damus, petimusq; vicissim.*) Let every one enjoy the Freedom, which the great Lord of all hath *Allowed* them.

Tho' God that required Sacrifices without *Blemishes*, would have those of our Prayers as free from *Mutilation* and *Defect*, as our *Frailty* will admit, Yet I do not expect to Join with any Worship on Earth that is *Perfect*. I am glad when I am concern'd in that which is *Least Faulty*. And tho' I would not make Invidious Comparisons, nor Cry up some Prayers, to the *Depreciating* of others: Yet I must make bold to tell the Dr. That I have heard Bishops and Dignitaries, and many Doctors, and Divines of this *Church*, (all very Learned and Pious,) Pray without the *Book*, both before their Sermons, and upon other Occasions, And with such a *Rational and Raised Devotion*, as has

been so far from Offensive and Grating, That it has been very Instructive and Edifying.

And here I cannot but Reflect, with some concernment, on the *Doctor's Sharp Reprimand of Praying before Sermon* which he Pag. 213. says, *Put the Rule of the Church, first out of Use, and then out of Countenance.* And that it is a *Senseless and Absurd practice*; *After the Church has been near for an Hour together, Praying for all that is Fit.* And, *That the Bidding-Prayer, against all Law and Reason, is Justled out by this Upstart Puritanical Encroachment, which is a Conforming to the Phanaticks.*

How desperately doth he Strike here at his *Fathers and Brethren*, peradventure the Most and the Best of this *Church*, That are not to Learn even of this Reverend Dr. either to *Preach* or to *Pray*? And I may add, Nor to *Obey* the *Canons* neither: Tho, I am told, he Learn'd this, at a very *Advantageous Season*; Yet what if I can point him to several *Canons*, that he doth not think Convenient to be so Punctual an Observer of, in his Parish? And must the very Name of *Bidding-Prayer* make this *Canon* more Binding, and *Bidding and Commanding* above all others? (Like as One *Canon* in a *Cathedral*, may be more *Imperious* than all the Rest.) But if Custom has made the *Bidding-Prayer*, (at least, in his sense of it,) as Unfashionable as the *Standing-Collars, and Priests Cloaks*, Rather let him Pelt me for following my *Betters*, than

than I'le make my self an *Antick*, Ridiculous to all, (but some Starche *I Dons*,) for Appearing still in the *Old Stiff Ruff*. Yet, (with Submission to Wiser Judgments,) I offer it to Second Thoughts, Whether he in his heat and *Transport* has not wrackt the *Canon* beyond its genuine drift and intention, For I do not find, that the Form there mentioned, is Absolutely Enjoin'd, So that the Prayer be but [**To that Effect**,] and as briefly as conveniently the *Preachers* may. Of which *Conveniency*, I think themselves are the Fittest *Judges*, or else they are not Fit to be *Preachers*. And if they find it not *Convenient* to be so *Brief* at one time, as at another, I see not but the *Canon* leaves them at *Liberty*. For even that which, in some Ears, sounds like a strict *Limitation*, in my Judgment, gives a fair *Latitude* for Variation and Addition, and shews that the *Canon* does not Impose an Indispensible and Unchangeable *Form*, but only Direct to some *Heads*, that should not be left out. When it is said, [**In this Form, or to this Effect, as briefly as conveniently they may.**] Doth not this leave Room to Vary and Enlarge, beyond the bare words of Prayer exprest in that *Canon*? For if I were Bound still to keep just to that very *Form*, and speak Nothing more than is there Mentioned; it would admit of no *Magis* and *Minus*, nor any thing else to be brought in, tho never so *Conveniently* and *Briefly*: And so run it up to the *Super-Conforming Height*, against all *Law* and *Reason* indeed. F 3 But

But if it be so *Senseless and Absurd*, to *Pray before Sermon*, Because all that is *Needful* has been asked Before : To what Sense then is it, That the *Church* and the *King* must be *Prayed for* again, (as the *Canon* prescribes,) When it has been done *Three or Four* times before ? Nay why then must the *Lords-Prayer* be *Repeated anew*, to *Shut up the Bidding-Prayer*, when it has been *Used also* as many times the same *Morning* ?

But he *Complains* not of another *New Mode*, as much *Prevailing* among a sort of *Divines*, and whereby the *Bidding-Prayer* is, I say not only *Equally Justled out*, but a great deal more *Despised*. And that is, When only a *Collect* is used before *Sermon* : (and it may be, the *Collect* which was used *Twice* the same *Morning before*) : Whether it be, That some think they have *Often enough Prayed for the King before* ; and do not care to use his *Name* any more than needs they must : Or that they are so little used to speak for themselves to *God*, they have nothing to say without the *Book* : Sure they are as *Uncanonical in Under-doing*, as others in *Over doing*. Nay they more grossly *Violate the Canon*, who do not at all *Pray To the Effect* there mentioned, Than those that do *Pray To that Effect*, But only (as some think,) in more *Words than Needs*.

I have heard the People complain of their *Laziness*, that do so slight and *Curtail Prayer* before *Sermon* : Declaring their *Offence at the Sermons*

sermons that look so *Bald* and *Naked*: And at the Men too which, they think, do so little *Give themselves to Prayer*, That they are ashamed to shew how *Awkward* they are at it: Or at least, betray what little *Kindness* they have for it. But if some call this *Modest* and *Humble*, Let them take it by that *Handle*, and I will think with them as far as ever I can: Where the men are *Grave* and *Serious*, *Holy* and *Devout*, I will *Censure myself* a hundred times, before I will throw one *Censure* at any such. Yet for some others, when I know the men, and their *Communication*; such as use to talk as if they were no *Sacred persons*, Their mouths more tun'd to *Cursing* than *Blessing*, and they more for *Potting* than *Praying*: I cannot for my heart, count it the *Vertue* and *Grace* of empty *Whifflers*, that I hear no more of their *Prayers*. I should esteem it their *Modesty* indeed, Not to *Contradict* themselves in their *Prayers*, if they did it not in their *Preaching* neither. But from hollow *Formalists* who can expect any *Effusions*, unless some *Overflowings of the Gall*? And I do not wonder at all, if they Pray not as if they were *Inspired*, who can Live as if they had not been *Christ'ned*. They may catch up somewhat made Ready to their Hands, that did *Cost them nothing*, But to *Compose* any thing of their own, They will not make *Bold* to be so *Diligent*, nor to *Condemn* some of their *Superiors*, that practise otherwise. To *Strive in Prayer*, They are for *Leaving*

ving off such Contention, before it be Meddled with It is a *Fervour* that does not agree with their *Constitutions*. They will not get themselves *Heat*, unless it be in *Rallying* against it, and crying out most Tragically, of the *Fanaticism* and *Faction*, the *Pride* and *Ostentation* that attends it. Abuses, I confess, from which it is not exempt, any more than the *Common-Prayer Book* it self is Priviledg'd from being *Thumb'd*, and soil'd with filthy Fingers. But we are not therefore constrain'd to throw either away, because they have been so unhappy, to suffer shamefully, by falling into *Ill hands*.

And methinks, it might give some Check to *Episcopal* men, (especially if in the Ministry,) for Running down the *Gift of Prayer* so un-

mercifully, as to affirm, *That the*
Page 157. *whole Devotion of all that pretend to it, proceeds from no other principle, but only a Love to hear themselves Talk. And that a Spirit of Pride, Faction, and Sedition is the only Spirit which these Impostors do really and indeed pray by.*

And that the Intoxicating, Bewitching, Cheat of Extempore Prayer has been all along the Devil's Master piece, and prime Engine to overthrow our Church by. And therefore it ought by all means to be Exploded and cast out of every sober, and well governed Church. Methinks, I say, it might a little Cool and Pacify all this *Heat* and *Rant* against the *Gift of Prayer*, That its Cause has been openly Espous'd and maintain'd by a very

very Learned and Pious Doctor, after made a Right Reverend Bishop, and one that so much Adorned the Seat he held: (Tho peradventure, Somebody that is out of Humour, may speak as scornfully of him, as he does of Another, who was lately the highest of the Epis-

copal Order in this Church: and is ^{Archbishop} Tillotson.

now further than ever out of the

Reach of all such Malevolent Detractors, as indeed before his much-Lamented Death, could only shew the Teeth which they knew not where to Fasten, and went tormented with this Vexation, that he whom they Stomach'd so much for that which (if a Fault,) he could not help, his Prince's Kindness; had Learning, Worth and Goodness that made him too great a Match for them all, and left them no Room, but only to Dishonour themselves, in attempting to Lessen Him. When no Charge could be found to ruin his Reputation, but his Moderation, That he should offer to make it known to all men, and let the World see, that he would never be one of the Jehu's, to keep pace with such Hot-spurs, as could never Forgive him, if but for that near Similitude on which was founded his Inviolable

^{Bishop} Wil-kins.

Friendship with the Excellent Person I am going to quote;) who publish'd an accurate Discourse concerning the Gift of Prayer: and therein tells us, That Ministers are more especially concern'd in this Gift, and that it is the greater Fault and Shame for them to be without it.

And

And if it be a fault not to strive and labour after it, How much more to Jeer and despise it, by the Name of Extempore Prayer, and Praying by the Spirit? Which expressions (says he) as they are frequently used by some men, in way of Reproach, are for the most part, a sign of a prophane heart, and of such as are altogether strangers to the Power and Comfort of this Duty. And if any think this to be but one great Doctor's opinion, It were easy to produce vast numbers that have made this Church as famous as any that ever liv'd in it, alike minded. And tho I pretend not to acquaintance with many Bishops, any further than by their Writings; yet those with whom in my Time, I have had opportunity to be most concern'd, disdained not to signify their Favour of this Way: Whatever Sons of the Church think fit to Decline and Reproach it. And I cannot reckon it any Honour to our Spiritual Fathers, to make people believe, that they are generally against it: or would Impose the Common-Prayer in Defiance of all else. As that must not be Neglected, so the Ministers Talent sure ought not to be Napkin'd, But upon occasion he is to shew, That he is fit to speak out of his own stock for his People *unto God*, as well as to speak so *from God to the People*.

But to what a Note above *Ela* has he strain'd the String, whom even the professed Vindicators of our *Liturgy* cannot come a-near? When the famous Mr. *Mead*, even where he is Justifying the Use of Set Forms, for all such occasions

sions as they serve for, Yet thus ends that discourse, *If any sudden and unexpected occasion happen, for which the Church cannot provide, The Spirit of her Ministers is Free: Who will forbid them in such a case, to supply that by a Voluntary and Arbitrary Form, which the Church could not provide for in a Set Form?* With whom Dr. Falkner sets in, (Lib. Eccles. p. 120.) Nor doth the Establishing a Form for the Publick Office of the Church deny the Liberty in due place of using other Prayers, according to the practice of ours, and the Ancient Church.

*Distrib. on
Mat. 6. 9.*

A Christian that cannot Pray, (says the good Bishop,) how much more a Minister,) is like an Orator that cannot Speak, or a Traveller that cannot go. This Gift is a part of our Spiritual Armour: And for a Soldier to be without any skill in the Use of his Arms, is both an Unsuitable, and a Dangerous condition. And what he there speaks of the Advantages of this Gift, and the Inconveniencies of its Want to Private Christians, is still more applicable to him that is the Mouth of the People. viz. To be able upon all occasions to relate their Condition, according to especial circumstances and several Emergencies. Or else when surpriz'd by any sudden Exigence, or lying under any great Strait, wherein no Help is to be expected but from the Hand of God: To be at a Loss what to say, without having recourse to some prescribed Form, (which perhaps has no proper reference to the particular occasion;) How Inconvenient

Inconvenient and prejudicial will this be, to lye under such a Disability of Expression?

The Readiness of Expression and Enlarging our Desires in fit manner, That, he calls the Gift of Prayer, Tho some, I know, would have it to consist in those Pious Dispositions within us, which I take to be rather, The Spirit of Supplications. For sure we ought to Distinguish the one from the other. However it is Possible for them to stand together, and most Lovelly they are in *Conjunction*: Yet one may have a *Praying Heart*, that hath not a *Voluble Tongue*; And again, another may Roll in apt *Expressions*, that is a Stranger to the *Spirit of Supplications*.

Now tho it is not for the *Weak* to put themselves upon Services above their *Strength*, Yet it looks ill, when men are *Fluent* on other Occasions, and only *Tongue-ty'd* at their Prayers: When they pass for *good Speakers* every where else, but are *Down in the mouth* at the Throne of Grace. This speaks a *Defect* that is suspiciois to be not only their *Calamity*, but their *Impiety*. Indeed the very Sense of Want and Pain, where prevalent, will open the Mouths not otherwise Eloquent, and sometimes suggest and dictate things above their common *Capacity*. As a *Malefactor*, tho no Orator, yet when Begging for his Life, will find *Words* Significative and Moving. However many may often need the assistance of *Books* and *Forms*: And whoever find their case better Exprest by others, than they know how to do it themselves, have their

their *Liberty* so to help themselves: And instead of Scrupling to use Others words, may *Thank God* for that *Advantage*, to warm their Hearts, and raise their Affections, and Enflame their Devotions.

It makes my Prayer neither better nor worse, whether my Eyes take words off the *Paper* before me: Or whether by recollection, I fetch them out of my *Memory*, which is (as the Bishop calls it,) but a kind of *Invisible Book*.

*To Read or speak by Rote,
Is all alike to him that Prays
With's Heart, what with his Mouth he says.*

Harvey.

But that I will conclude to be the *Best* way for me to take, whichsoever it be, that helps me to Pray most pertinently, humbly, faithfully, and fervently. Some can Pray better with this Form, some with that, and some with none. Therefore Let every *Devout* Christian that makes Conscience of Worship, and gives himself to Prayer, consult his own *Experience*, and Enjoy his *Liberty*, to take that way which he finds Best for himself. There is an *Abridging* ourselves, that gives Check to our Improvement: And I am not tied always to use this very *Staff* or any at all, If I find that I can do as well, or Better without it. There is a *Growth* in Knowledge and Grace, as well as in Bodily Stature and Strength. And some *Sutes* of Prayer,

er, as well as *Suits* of Cloaths, we may be *Outgrown*. As Piety brings me upon my Knees then, So Prudence must *Adapt* my Words. Tho *Old* words, it's true, may be used with *New Affections*, and serve as well where the case is the same: Yet there are some *New Occasions* of my Life that call for a *New Song*. And where the Expressions as well as Affections are *New*, and the best that we can fetch out of our *Treasure*, It speaks the *Value* which we put upon our *Benefactors* favours, That we prize them more than to mention them still in the ordinary *Role*. We count it not only *Flat* and *Dilute*, but *Contemptuous* and *slighting*, to speak after that Manner, to our great *Friends* on earth; How much more concern'd should we be to Appear before the *Greatest* and *Best* of all which is in *Heaven*, with somewhat to express our highest *Regard* of Him and his *Blessings*, and also our most *Careful Hearts* to approve our selves *Sensible* and duly *Affected*? Of which our Speech is the *Indication*: And so that we Express our selves to the purpose, it matters not whether the words be *our own*, or *Borrowed*, from one or another: We may *Press* them into this Service wherever we find them. But thou poor weak Christian, whose *Parts and Abilities* are not equal to thy *Zeal and Piety*, When thou art *Moved* to Pray, and hast but a *Praying Heart*, O take heed that thou never Forbear thy Prayers, for want of Words at *Command*, to Set them off. For if thou couldst

not

not so much as Read, or Speak at all; Yet thou might'st *Pray*. And tho thou hast not a *Fluency* of Speech and *Choice* of Expressions, in a Readiness, (which indeed are *Gifts* more for the Service and Edification of *others*, than for any Saying Benefit to the *Owners*:) Yet throw and *Prostrate* thy self before the *Lord*, and Try to make somewhat of it, in opening the fesse and the Desires of thy Soul, at the Throne of Grace, ~~or~~ Doing as thou *Canst*, where thou canst not as thou *Would'st*: And thou may'st do even as well without the Flowing Utterance and *Elocution*; Yea peradventure, Better: Because thereby thou art kept *Humbler*, and so fitter for his *Acceptance*, who to this man will *Look*, even to him that is *Poor* and of a *Contrite* *Spirit* and trembles at his *Word*.

S E C T. VIII.

The Liberty of Varying our Prayers, as to the Parts and Words.

THE usual Method of Prayer is *Confession*, *Petition*, and *Thanksgiving*. Yet we are not in every Prayer, tied up just to this Order. We may sometimes omit one of the Parts, or put the Last First, or only Beg, without Expli-cite *Confessing* our Sins, or *Blessing* the Lord. Tho we are Bound to all these things, yet not at all *Times* that we make our Prayers. We may Insist but upon one Point, and yet not

Maim

Maim or Mangle our Devotions: According as we are particularly *Disposed* in our Minds, or prest with any particular *Occasions* in our Lives. That which at this *Time*, we find we have most *Need* to do, or are fittest for the doing, To do it Heartily will suffice, and find Acceptance, Tho every thing be not mentioned that belongs to a *Full Prayer*. It is not a Guilt at which we need to Deject our selves, for Curtailing and *Dismembring* our Offices, When we leave out some *Part*, and are Intent upon another, in which we think our selves *Now* more immediately Concerned. 'Tis well, and indeed a great Attainment, in which we may Hug our selves, If we can dispatch but any one *Part*, with serious and fervent Devotion. Tho the *Enumeration* and Confession of our Sins, with Confusion of face and *Compunction* of heart, to Humble us before the Lord, and prepare us for his Pardon and Grace, is of the greatest use for poor *Obnoxious* Sinful Creatures: Yet in our Lord's own *Form* there is no *Confession*, but only what is *Tacit* and *Implicit*: As where in asking for *Daily Bread*, we acknowledge our Wants and Indigence: In begging *Forgiveness* of our *Trespasses*, we acknowledge our Guilt and Wickednes: And in Praying not to be *Lead into Temptation*, we acknowledge our Weaknes, and how prone we are of our selves, to go all to Naught: And also that we *Deserve* the Punishment, which we Pray to be *Delivered from*. So that altho we should be us'd and forward

forward to *Confession*, Yet we must not Entangle our *Consciences* with a Conceit of the *Necessity*, lying upon us, expressly to Confess our Sins in every Prayer: Nor yet the Necessity of particularly Reciting the Mercies and Favours which we have received at the hands of God. Tho Thankfulness (which is our good Manners towards Heaven) as much becomes his *Obliged*, as *Confession* (which is a Self Arraignment, to clear our Judge,) becomes his *Offenders*: Yet there may be the *Broken* and the *Grateful* heart, sensible both of Sin and Mercy, without the particular Naming, either our Sins, or God's Benefits.

However 'tis my own Sense, and my desire to make all I can alike minded, That it not only Becomes, but *Behoves* us to be Thankful: which being a Tribute we owe to the Crown of *Heaven*, I count it no better than *Wrong* and *Robbery* to withhold it. Nay so Material a point is this, That some (I think, not amiss) have summ'd up the whole of our Religion in the one Word, *Gratitude*: To be sensible of our Receipts from Above, and all our Obligations to the Lord, and still Acknowledging the Debt, which we are never Able to Pay: Full of Concernment, *What we shall render to the Lord for all his Benefits*; And where the Poverty of our case checks all thoughts of Retaliation, yet giving unto God, at least, the *Glory* of his own Gifts: Yea for the due Expression of this *Gratitude*, Loving and Honouring, and Praising our great

Benefactor; Trusting and Delighting in him, Afraid to Offend and Lose him, and studying and striving in all things, to Please him. And as it is our *Reasonable Service*, and the most Ingenious Disposition of Soul, (as well as the sweetest Solace of our Lives, The *Marrow and Fatness* of our Religion, and the joyful Employment of Blessed Spirits above,) thus to Observe and Recount, to Particularize and Magnify the Favours of Heaven to us; So 'tis the most Decent Begging of what is yet Wanting: and our prudential Gaining upon the *Goodness of God*, to run on still in the same Channel: Seeing he accounts his Benefits there best placed, where they are most Gratefully Resented. This then we must be in care not to leave Undone: And yet I dare not say that we are bound to do it (*toties quoties*) every time we Pray.

So tho' it looks most proper for the Guilty and *Conscivis*, to go upon their Submission to the Holy Majesty offended, and before they *Ask*, to Acknowledge how unworthy they are to *Receive*: and make their Confessions the *Introduction* to their Prayers: Yet a Great man, well vers'd in these matters, The Right Reverend Bishop *Hall*, (in an Epistle concerning the *Continual exercise of a Christian to Keep his heart*,) gives this Advice, To begin our Prayers with the *Praises of God*, Taking notice of all his Goodness to us, and the great things which still he has done for us, and the continued Favours

vours with which he goes on to Oblige us. To be in *Thanksgiving* first, and then in *Requests*. And to Bethink our selves, How Unworthy we have walk'd of such Mercy, and to recount our Abuses of his Kindness and Love, may prove an effectual Method to *Melt* and *Dissolve* our hard and stony Hearts: That laying to heart, how Good he has been to us, and how wretchedly we have Misbehav'd our selves, and carried most ill to the *Best of Fathers*, *The Goodness of God may lead us to Repentance*. Now they that, upon trial, find the *Benefit* of this course, are *Free*, to take it. And I shall not think it *Preposterous* in my Prayers, To deliver my self *First* of that which lies most upon my *spirit*, and chiefly Affects my Heart, whatever it be; Good things to be Begged: Or Sins or Mercies to be Acknowledged: I take it for a *Direction* and *Call*, to *Begin* with that which I am so *Full* of, and in Pain till I have poured it out; However it may seem to *Invert* the common Order.

And if you make use of *Another's Form*, You must not think your selves obliged to every Word, and to take *All before you*: But may alter or add, or leave out, as Discretion shall suggest, or you Judge fittest for your purpose. They that are Conversant with God have a *Taste* for Spiritual things, as well as for their common *Food*, To Distinguish between better and worse. And then they are not Bound to take all that they find, and to swallow that which they do not *Like*: But may pick out of

the *Book*, all one as at the *Table*, what is *Agreeable*, and let the rest alone; and make it up with what they find most *Grateful* to them, and *Beneficial* for them.

Yea he that is to be the *Speaker*, in Praying with others, may *Change* his Prayers, according to the Company, without being a sinful *Time-server*, or *Man-pleaser*. Tho it is the same God I speak to every where, Yet the Wants and Humours of men are so exceeding *Different*, that what most *Takes* with some is as much *Disgusted* by others. And tho I am not to Comply with them to Harden or Hurt them, and must not care so much to *Please men as God*, nor be check'd by the Company, nor let my Devotion flutter among them, instead of flying up to *Heaven*, nor Regard any *Men* comparably to the *Great God*, But *Cease from Man whose breath is in his nostrils*, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Yet there is a *Lawful Becoming all things, to all men*, and *Pleasing* all for their *Good to Edification*. And I must give no *Just Offence* to any. However some may be *Offended* at that which is not really *Offensive*, Yet if I know it to be *Distastful*, I would not offer it, if I could well avoid it, I would not *Obtrude* upon them the *Food of their Souls* so *Cook'd*, as they cannot *Abide* it, But give them the same thing, in another *Vehicle* and *Preparation*. And that not to be *applauded* by them, or to *Ingratiate* my self with them: But to be most *Useful* to them, and best to serve the *Ends of Religion* upon them.

them. And upon this account, I scruple not, sometimes, to *Vary* my Prayers, according to the *Genius* and Inclination of the *Company* with whom I am to Pray. For two Companies may be both of them Pious and well dispos'd, And yet the one all for that *Way* which the other is as much *Against*. And I have no Scruple of Conscience against *either way*. If then I would not *Offend* but *Edify* them, I must take the way which I perceive to be most *Agreeable*. That they may heartily *Concur* with me, and that my Prayers may not be an Exercise of their *Patience*, but of their *Devotion*.

C H A P. III.

The Liberty of Praying as to the Time.

S E C T. I.

The Liberty of Praying at Any Time.

THE Scripture Command is, *To Seek the Lord while he may be Found, and to Call upon him while he is Near.* And the Time when he will be Found, is *All day long.* For as long as he Stretches forth his Hands to *Receive us*, we may *Lift up our Hands to Receive of Him.* And the whole Day of *Grace* is the *Hour of Prayer.*

Prayer. And whenever we have a *Heart* to Pray, God hath an *Ear* to attend it. Earthly Kings, it's true, are not always to be spoken with. *Courtiers* themselfes cannot have the Princes *Ear* when they Will. He can never Hear all his *Subjects* Cries, and it is but rarely that he Hears *any*. And sometimes when he doth, He is only *Exasperated* at the Petitioners, and had rather they would let him alone. And we our selves use to put off the Beggars that press often upon us, Telling them how *Lately* they have been with us, and twitting them with the Courtesies they have so many times *Received* from us. We make that which we have done already, an *Excuse* to hold our Hands. Such is the *Imperfection* of Mortals, and the *Indigence* of Creatures, that we are *Tired* out, to be Long Urged: And our stock will be *Exhausted* by frequent Distribution. But God whose Understanding, Power, and Love are as *Infinite* as Himself, is ever at *Leisure* to Hear us, and can receive no manner of *Disturbance* from all the Throngs of Seekers. Tho' every Creature all over the *Universe* should Call upon him at the same *Moment*, (as by their Wants and continual Need of him, they all do;) His Ears are still *Open* to them All. For as all the World is no more trouble to him, than if it were but *One man*: So every particular Man is as much Minded by Him, as if that man were *all the World*. And equal to his Knowledge of all our Wants is his *Ability* and

and *Inclination* to do for all his Petitioners. Come as oft as we will, He will look the *sweeter* upon us. At any Time he is *Ready* for us, To receive our Suits, and give Audience to what we have to say. Nay, he makes his Gifts the *Motives* of more, and goes on to do, because he has done much *Already*. So that his Experienced Bounty, is his *Peoples Argument* to Speed. And even from what they have had, they Plead for what they would have. Gen. 32. 10, 11. *Mercy and Truth thou hast shewed to thy Servant. Deliver me I pray thee.* And Psal. 27. 9. *Thou hast been my Help; Leave me not, neither Forsake me O God of my Salvation.*

We have no Excuse then ever to keep off from *God*, As we are shy of Visiting our *Friends* too thick, least they should be *Sick* of us, and *Weary* to do us *Good*. *God* hath not only certain Times of *Hearing*, As *Sabbaths*, and *Holy-days*, and such and such *Critical Junctures*, appointed for the purpose. No Time is Unseasonable to Visit *Heaven* with our *Prayers*. Evening and Morning, Noon and *Midnight*, the Gates lye open to us. If we be there every *Day*, and every *Hour*, we shall find no *Repulse*, but still the better *Welcome*. If *All day long our Heart is in our Knee*, *Herb*. We are not *Limited*, Go as oft as we will, it is no oftner than we are *Called*, For the *Word* is, *Pray without Ceasing*.

S E C T. II.

Of Praying Without Ceasing.

THE Injunction, 1 Thes. 5. 17. seems to *Infringe* the *Liberty* of *Prayer*, instead of Enlarging it: For if we must be *Always Praying*, The Time is not at our *Disposition*, nor have we the *Liberty* ever to Leave off. Nay, instead of offering us a gracious *Liberty*, This *Text* seems to Load us with a hard *Necessity*, that carries in it an *Impossibility*. For how can any man in the world *pray Always*? I answer, The *Apostle* cannot here be understood, as enjoyning us so to Pray, that we should do *Nothing else*: Because one *Duty* must not *Interfere* with another, nor Jutle out all the rest. And we have many other things to do besides Praying. Therefore it must be *softened* so as to require of us only what we can well perform. And that is, To keep our selves still in a *Frame* and disposition for Prayer, that we may be *Ready*, upon all Occasions, to fall into it. For as Bp. *Hall* instructs us, [Devout Soul, p. 10.] *Devotion is not only an Alt of Vocal Prayer, But the Habitual disposition of a holy Soul sweetly conversing with God, in all the Forms of a heavenly (yet awful) Familiarity, and a Constant entertainment of ourselves here below with the God of Spirits in our sanctified thoughts and affections.* 'Tis true, The Sacrifice

Sacrifice must not be evermore *Actually* in the offering, But the Fire of Devotion ever *Burn-ing* on the *Altar* of the heart. And no day must we Intermit our *Times* of Praying, but go on in a *Course* of Prayer, without Faint-ing: and let its Returns be as Constant as our *Meals*. And as after our Dinner, we have done Eating for that *Time*: But should we Cease to *Eat*, we must Cease to *Live*: So Prayer being a part of our Spiritual Suste-nance, we are every day to make our *Meals* of it, but never have done with it, till we have no *Sins* to be Pardon'd, No *Wants* to be supplied, That is, till we have attained to such Perfection, as is not in this Life *At-tainable*. We must not Give over, thô we haye not straight every thing that we Ask. But keep our suits on the File, *Depending* at the Throne of Grace. And as some Denial and drawing back, does but *Whet* the importunate Suiters Request. So if the Lord seems some-times to *Cast us away in Displeasure*, Yet we must take no Denial, nor be *Weary of well-doing*: But renew and *Double* our Requests; For *in Due time we shall reap, if we Faint not*. Still we must Examine ourselves for the *Ob-struction*, and strive to Amend the matter in the next Prayer. And then we may take eve-ry *Second* Prayer, for an answer to the *for-mer*: and conclude, That he who gives us the Grace to *Persist*, *Favours* our Cause. Yea the very *Perseverance* which he gives, may

may be *Better* than the thing which we asked.

Use the *Liberty* granted then, and go on to *Pray in Hopes to Speed*. Seek *every day*, That you may not be sadly to *Seek* at your *Last day*. Some have more *Leisure*, and they should be *Much in Prayer*. And the men of *Business* ought to *Pray* for the *Success*, and *Sanctification* too, of their *Business*. But whoever *Fears* and *Loves God*, will find *Time to Wait* upon him *Every Day*, whatever *Stands* the while. In the *Morning* we are *Exposed* to the wide *World*, and have need to put ourselves under the *Divine Conduitt*. And at *Night*, we are as in the *Suburbs* of *Death*, And therefore before we lie *Down*, it concerns us to *Even* matters with *Heaven*, lest we *Rise* not till it be in *Another World*. Much of a *Christian's* *businels* lies on his *Knees*. Let us be *Much in Prayer*, while we have *Time*, And when all our *Time* is gone, we shall have an *Eternity*, to be ever *Praising the Lord*.

S E C T. III.

Of Chusing the Best Times for Prayer.

Seeing we are not punctually Determined, as to particular Times of Prayer, It will be our *Wisdom* and *Piety*, to make choice of the *Fittest* *Seasons* for that purpose. Tho we

we should have our *Stated Times*, to which we may be Constant, without any fear of *Superstition*, And shall find it, not so Dangerous, as Useful, to have the *Sun* and *Clock* for our *Remembrancers*. And tho we count not one Time of the day *Holier* than another, Yet the very Appointing of *Set Times* for Prayer, shews that we value the Office more, than to leave it at Random, as a *Chance business*, Lest so it should be Thrown by, and not done at all. And that we would *Secure* it at certain Seasons, tho we do not *Confine* it only to those very Times. And tho we are not lightly to Vary and Break so good a *Custom*. Yet we may, upon occasion, Break our *Usual Times*, without Breaking any of Gods *Commands*. Because he has no where bid us do it *Just Now*, but to see that it be *Duly done*.

We must then *Watch unto Prayer*, not only while we are in it: But also to take the *Fittest Times* for it. Those (*Mollia Fandi Tempora*) Favourable Seasons of Address, when our *Hearts are Fixed*, and the Feet of our *Affections stand right*. When *Our beloved puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and our Bowels are moved for him*. Cant. 5. 4. When He that is to do All for us, gives us some peculiar *Hint* and *intimation*, to come now, and *Receive*, what he is infinite-ly *Full of*, and more *Inclinable* to make us *Happy with*, than we to *Seek it*. When he gives such *Intimations* of his *Favour* as *Ahabuerus to Esther*, *What is thy Petition, and it shall be granted*; O ! let

O! let us prize such *Golden opportunities*, more than ever to Omit and Lose them, when they are set before us.

Chuse the best Time of the *Day*, when your mind is most Composed, and your Soul in fittest Frame for the Work. And neglect not the Spring and Flower of *Age*: But *Seek the Lord Early*: *Remember him in the dars of your YOUTH*: And he will not cast you off in the time of your *Old Age*. Let it not be only for a *Shift*, that you Fly to him, when the World is *Shaking you off*, and you know not what to do with your selves. But in Health and Prosperity, be drawn by the *Bands of Love*: Before you are *Driven* by a sad Necessity, to Seek the Lord, *When he Slays you*. Yea lest then he turn you over to the *Miserable Comforters*, for whose sake you Forsook Him, and make you find the *Verification* of that Threat, *Prov. i. 28. Then shall they Call upon me, but I will not answer them; They shall Seek me Early, but they shall not find me.* For surely in the *Floods of great Waters*, *they shall not come nigh to Him.* *Psal. 32. 6.* In such a dismal *Plunge*, Ungodly mens *Heads* Turn, instead of their *Hearts*. They know not where they are then, nor what to do, nor how to apply to the *God*, to whom they have been still the greatest *Strangers*. And no wonder, He is not at their *Beck*, in their *Adversity*, whom they did nothing but *Slight* all the days of their *Prosperity*.

S E C T. IV.

The Liberty of Praying in Time of Trouble.

TH O' Wicked men are at so sad a *Loss*, in the Time of their sorest *Need*, *Groping* in the Dark for what they would not *Seek* while they had *Light*. Because they put off the Work of their *Salvation*, till they were *Weary* of their Lives, and a *Burthen* to themselves, and good for nothing, but to *Nurse* their Disease, and *Bewail* their Troubles. And so when Invaded with *Sickness* and the *Messengers* of *Death*, They lie either like *Dead Logs* insensible of their condition: Or Struggle as a *Wild Bull in a Net*, full of the *Fury of the Lord*, the *Rebuke of their God*: Listless to *Seek* where their Help lies, Or else *Despairing* to find it, if Sought. Yet all Pious Souls that have *Given themselves to Prayers*, find the same God of *Consolation* to *Shelter* them in *Affliction*, whom they Delighted in approaching to, during their *Better days*. *In him they have Peace*, when nothing but *Tribulation in the World*: Yea, are *Bold in their God*, tho he looks as if he were against them. Knowing that they may be *Cast down*, and not *Cast off*. *Poor and Needy*, Yet *thought upon by the Lord*. In a *Low estate*, and yet *Remembred* in everlasting *Mercy*, By that God who *Abhors not the Affliction of the Afflicted*, Nor Loves his Children ever the less, for *Chastening*

stening them : But in *very Faithfulness Afflicts them*, Out of Kindness to them, As that which he knows to be Needful and Best for them. And like as we Sprinkle Water on the Fire, to make it burn the Fiercer : He lays Affliction on their Loins, not to Discourage, but to *Quick-en* their Prayers, and to make way for his *Praises* : Not to *Affright* them from him, but to bring them *Nearer* to Him. Psal. 50. 15. *Call upon me* (says he) *in the day of Trouble*, *I will Deliver thee* : *and thou shalt Glorify me*. Indeed that *Trouble* whatever it be, does us a great deal of Good, which does not Hinder, but *Invigorate* our Prayers; and makes us able to declare, as that sore Afflicted man, to his friend coming to Visit, and asking him How he did? *I thank God* (says he) *I can Pray Better since these Troubles, than ever I could in my life before*. Wilt thou not Pray to God then because he *Afflicts* thee? Why for that very Reason thou must do it the *Rather*. Jam. 5 13. *Is any among you Afflicted?* Let him Pray. At all Times we should gladly embrace the *Advantage* of Drawing nigh to our Gracious God, and Pouring out our Hearts before him. But especially when his *Hand* is upon us, our *Eyes* and *Hearts* should be lifted up to Him; Who has *Torn and Smitten*, and alone can *Heal and Bind up our Breaches*. Whatever be the Distress, God is a *Refuge* sufficient for us. Our *Refuge* and *Strength*, our *present Help in Time of Trouble*. 'Tis to some purpose, to make our application to

to Him, who at the Lowest can *Raise*, and at the Worst, is able to *Relieve* us. *Refuge failed me, no man cared for my Soul*; yet I cried unto thee ô Lord, and said, *Thou art my Refuge, and my Portion in the Land of the Living.* Psal. 142.

4, 5. Yea thô men *Provoke* him, and are *Brought Low for their Iniquity*, Nevertheless he *Regards their Affliction*, when he hears their *Cry.* Psal. 106.

43, 44. Thô Foolish Sinners, for their *Transgressions and Iniquities are Afflicted*, Yet when they *Cry to the Lord in their Troubles*, He *saves them out of their Distress.* Psal. 107. 17—16.

Whatever comes upon us, it cannot *Undo* us, as long as we have the way open to the *Almighty Friend* in whom is our *Help*. Whatever we *Lose*, We may ask and have a *Better* thing at his *Hands*. Whatever we *Suffer*, if we make our *moan*, and cry to him for *Succor*, He will *Remove* it from us, or *Sanctify* and *Sweeten* it to us, that it shall do us no *Hurt*, but *Work for our Good*. With this *Staff* of Prayer, we may walk over *Rock*s and *Mountains*, and Surmount all our Troubles and Disasters.

Whoever are against us, and run us down, No matter, if we can *Appeal to Heaven*, and have God our *Friend*, and Engage the Almighty Lord of all into our Interests. *For my Love they are my Adversaries, but I give my self unto Prayer.* Ps. 109. 4. Instead of *Wrangling* with them, I turn to Him that can order them, and *Save* me from them: Or make me more than amends for all the *Damage* that I can sustain by them. When I am in *Heaviness* and

my

my Spirit is overwhelmed within me ; To unload my Breast before the Lord, Eases my Oppressed mind, and helps me to that Relief from Above, which the World cannot give. As Hannah, after she had Prayed to the Lord in Bitterness of Soul, and pour'd it out, and wept sore : She went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. 1 Sam. 1. 10, 15, 18.

Let me be shut up in *Prison*, none can Im-prison my Prayers : but my Soul may *Expatriate* and sally out to my *Father which sees in Secret*. No Walls or Irons can stop me from Him, who is every where Present, and *Nigh unto all that Call upon him*. I am but a Prisoner in the *Body*, and in this World, (which is but a greater *Jail*,) But Prayer sets me at *Large*, and carries me even to *Heaven* beforehand. And however I am Tempted, Troubled, and sore put to it, Still I have Leave and Liberty to *Remonstrate*, and make my moan Above, and seek Redress at the hands of *Omnipotent Love*. And let me continue so to Seek, and Pray *Heartily*, And I shall be *Happy* in spight of all Disasters and misery.

C H A P. IV.

The Liberty for the Place of Prayer.

THE Infinite Majesty that is every where *Present*, is no more tied to *Places* than *Times*. *I will that men Pray Every where*, faith the Apostle, *1 Tim. 2. 8.* The whole World is *God's House*, and no Place of it unfit wherein to *Invoke* him that *Made* it. Not a Hole or Corner where He that *fills Heaven and Earth*, is not Aware of me. We may *Hallow* any Ground we tread upon, and *Consecrate* every Place we come in, for a *Proseucha*, the *Chappel* and *Altar* of our Devotion, by offering up our Prayers to *Jehovah Shammah*, *The Lord that Sees us*. And when we have no better, even a *Dunghill* or a *Dungeon* will be *Oratories*, as recommending as the *Temple*. Tho when it is at our choice, *The Church*, which is peculiarly styled *The House of Prayer*, must be Preferred: And while we have the Liberty and opportunity of *Going with the Multitude to the House of God*, and those *Doors* lie Open to us, We must take heed of Slighting the Blessed *Priviledge*, So much prized by the Servants of the Lord that *Enjoy* it, and so much Bewailed by them that *Want* it. We must dread to *Excommunicate* our selves from the Assemblies where the Lord *Feeds*, and *makes his Flock to rest*, and not be as those that *Turn aside by the*

Flocks of his Companions. Instead of making that heavy *Judgment* our wilful *Choice*, To turn our selves out of the Courts of the *House of our God*, we must greatly rejoice in the Favour, and with all our hearts, be glad of the Freedom, *To go into the House of the Lord.* Yea, we must *Long for his Courts, and Love the Habitation of his House*, and count it so *Amiable*, that we had rather be *Janitors* in his Temple, where his *Retainers* are *Still praising him*, and *Every one speaks of his Honour*, than to have all the Pomp and Splendor of the World, among the Strangers and Enemies to God, that do nothing but despise and Affront him. *O ! enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise. Be Thankful to him and Bless his Name.* Psal. 100. 4. Not only accept the Benefit while offered, but Prize it most highly, and Embrace it most eagerly. Rejoicing with all your Souls, that you may be so Happy, there to make your Prayers.

But yet you must not take Prayer for a *Sacrifice* tied only to that *Holy Place*, nor use to Pen up all your Religion within the *Church-walls*, and there let it lie till the next time. Your own Houses also are to be *Bethel's* and *Houses of Prayer*; Such Families, where the *Name of God* is daily and duly *Call'd upon*. Every Master in his House may *Officiate* as the *Priest*, without Usurping the Honour of *Aaron* to himself. And by such Leading the way in God's humble Worship at thy *House*, thou ownest him

him to be more *Master* there than thy self. Which will be so far from Losing; that it will *Greaten* thee more than any thing else can do, and make thee far more considerable and *Worthy*, than all the Proud Scorning of his Service, as a thing Below thee. *For them that Honour him, God has promised to Honour.*

But of all the House, our Lord hath given a peculiar *Consecration* to the *Closet*, where when the Door is *Shut* and Barr'd up, (to make it yet more a *Closet*,) under that *Confinement* lies the greatest *Liberty*: And such a *Prisoner* is the most *Free* to *Expatiate* in Prayer. When *Sequestred* from the World, thou maist much better Descend into thy own Heart: And more out of the danger of *Ostentation*, maist Pour out all thy Soul, and demonstrate thy Faith in the *Omnipresence* and continual *Inspection* of that God to whom *Closets* and *Hearts* are as Open as *High-ways*, and the Face of the *Congregation*. The Lord calls to see the Countenance, and to *Hear the Voice of his Dove, in the Clefts of the Rocks, in the Secret place of the Stairs.* Cant. 2. 14. In such *Retirements* he uses most freely to *Impart* Himself. And there should we cast and covet to Meet *Him whom our Soul's Love*. And not think it any *hard Put* upon us, but the most sweet and blessed Advantage, to leave even the best and Dearest Company, to go to God our *Exceeding Joy*. *What care I for Chatting with Friends on earth,* (said Bishop Hall, shut up in the Tower,) *when I may talk familiarly*

with the God of Heaven ? As our Saviour gave a discharge even to his own Disciples, Mat. 26. 36. *Tarry ye here, while I go and Pray yonder* : So get sometimes out of the Crowd and *Hurry* of worldly Avocations and distractions, that thou maist find a full *Vacation* and happy *Freedom* to wait upon thy God. And when so taken up with Him in *Secret*, bethink thy self, what main *Grievance* it is thou hast to make thy moan of: What especial *Favour* thou hast to Beg: What Sin that lieth hardest upon thy *Conscience* to be Pardoned: What noisom *Corruption* to be Healed: What most Wanted *Grace* or Good thing, to be Desired. And there tell all, as having the fairest Opportunity to be *Bold*: And put on *hard*, as one that will not be Denied.

Abraham Retired into his *Grove*: *Isaac* to the *Field*: *Jacob* Wrestled with God upon the *Way*: *Elijah* Prayed under the *Juniper-Tree*: *Jeremiah* in the *Dungeon*: *Daniel* in the *Lions Den*: *Jonah* in the *Whales Belly*: Our *Saviour* in the *Garden*, and often in the *Mount*: St. *Peter* on the *House-Top*. No matter what is the Place, so it minister to our Devotion, and help us indeed to *Draw nigh to God*: Which is not to be done with the Body, and shifting of Places, but in the *Elevation* of the Heart, and *Fervor* of Affections. (*Non Passibus, sed Precibus itur ad Deum, Aug.*) Prayer is the *Messenger*.

Messenger that doth our Errand there, where *Flesh* cannot come. And wherever a man is, or however taken up, even in the midst of his Worldly occasions, His *Soul* may fly out, and steal away to *God*: Or send up Secret *Ejaculations* that shall pierce the *Heavens*, and find as sure a *Conveyance*, as if they had bounded from the *Temple*. However then we should be Glad to go into the *House of the Lord*, when Opportunity serves: Yet when we have a *Motion* to Prayer any where, we must not withhold it, for want of a *Better Place*, from whence to send it up.

C H A P. V.

The Liberty of Prayer, as to the Persons
Praying.

S E C T. I.

The Liberty that All Sorts have to Pray.

Every one that is Godly shall Pray unto thee ô Lord. Psal. 32. 6. No Godly man but will do it. And all manner of Persons, as they have *Need*, So they are *Allowed* to do it. Only the *Priest* of old entred the *Holy Place*: Now

he that hath Loved and Redeemed us, and wash'd us from our Sins in his own Blood, hath made us all *Kings and Priests unto God.* Rev. 1. 6. God is no *Respecter of Persons.* The Poorest shall have as fair and full a Hearing with Him, as the Biggest man in the World. Tho he be the *most High*, yet the *Lowest* are not beneath his Notice. If they are Low in their own eyes, and *Poor in Spirit*, as well as of Low Estate, and Poor in the *World*, They are indeed the Nearer to his Acceptance, Who *hath Respect unto the Lowly.* *And to this man will Look, that is Poor, and of a Contrite Spirit, and I trembles at his Word.* Isa. 66. 2. *This Poor man cried, and the Lord Heard him, and saved him out of all his Troubles.* Psal. 34. 6. From the Height of his *Sanctuary* he looks down even upon the most *Abject* wretches on Earth. Even such as are Rejected of men, and just ready to be *Thrust* out, as not fit to Live in the *World*. *To hear the groaning of the Prisoner. To loose those that are Appointed to death.* Psal. 102. 20. *He will Regard the Prayer of the Destitute, and not despise their Prayer.* v. 17. The Lord sees not as man sees: To Regard men according to their Garb and Dresses, but according to their Faith and Graces. Yea according to their Cries and Necessities. And even that *Abjection* and Beggary, for which others *Overlook* and Scorn them, is the very *Motive* of God's Inclining to them, and taking Notice of them. *Do thou for me O God the Lord for thy Name's sake, because thy mercy is good, Deliver*

Deliver thou me, For I am Poor and Needy. Psal. 109. 21. *For the Oppression of the Poor, for the Sighing of the Needy, now will I arise saith the Lord, I will set him at Liberty.* Psal. 12. 5. Tho God, that hath *Chosen the Poor of this World*, is not Fond of a man, only for this reason, because he is *Poor*; For there may not be more Wicked men than many Poor men: Yea such as are fain to Beg their *Bread of Men*, may yet be none of Gods *Beggars*, and so none of his *Favourites*. This, not for their Bodily wretchedness, but for their Souls Ungodliness, because matters are not so Ill with their *Bodies*, but they are Worse with their *Souls*. Yet (*ceteris paribus*) No Poor man shall be ever the less Welcome with God, for his *Poverty*: but be as soon Heard, and as much Respected by Him, as *His Excellency*, or *His Highness*, the most Eminent and Mighty, who look to be *Observed* of all, and that every one else must be *Silent*, when they *Speak*. Such are often too High, to be God's Humble Servants. Like the *Wicked*, Psal. 10. 4. *Who thrô the Pride of his Countenance will not Seek after God.* Tho there is none so Rich and well-provided, but they stand in continual need of *God's Alms*: And they that abound in the *World's Good*, must yet beg of him their *Daily Bread*, and have need (of all men,) to Pray hard, That they may not be put off with their *Portion in this Life*, and be *Tormented*, when *Lazarus shall be Comforted*. Let not the Rich man rejoice so much in his *Riches*, as that he

may go to God, to save him from the *Danger* of them. And let him not Pray the Less, but the More, That thrô so many *Temptations*, he may get Safe into the *Kingdom of God*. Let not any *Nobles*, *Gentlemen* or *Ladies* ever fear it will Dbase their Dignity, to *Cringe* to Him, that has far greater than any *Kings* or *Queens* on Earth, for his daily Attendants. If they are too Goodly to be Godly, they will be too High to be Saved, Prayer is *Man well Drest*. Herb. The finest Creature is best *Adorned*, when most *Humbled*. And when the *Knees* are Bowed, the *Mouth* Confessing, the *Hands* Smiting, the *Eyes* Blubbered, the *Cheeks* bedewed : Nothing in the sight of Heaven is more Becoming and *Recom-*
mending. *Ephraim* was heard so *Bemoaning* himself, And presently it follows, *Is Ephraim my dear Son, is he a pleasant Child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord.*
Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20.

But if the *King of Heaven* will admit of the Poorest mans Request, and such as should not be suffered to speak to their *Prince*, shall be Heard speaking as much, and as often as they will, to their *God*, O ! how Unwise and Wicked then are those *Poor*, that will not thus *Ingratiate* and prefer themselves, to be as *Great* with *God*, as they are *Despicable* in the World? That they may not Lose both Worlds, but Pray themselves into a better *Kingdom*, than all the *Kingdoms* on Earth.

Let

Let the *Afflicted* Pray, That they may not *Perish in their Troubles* And let the *Prosperous* Pray, That they may not be *Destroyed* by their very *Prosperity*. Let the *Idle* Pray, because they have *Leisure*. And let the *Busy* Pray, to *Hallow* their *Implyments*. *Spare time* can never be better *Bestowed*. And the *Soul* amidst *Multiplicity* of *Business* can never be better *Secured*. Let the *Learned* Pray, because they *Know How*. And let the *Ignorant* Pray, That they may be *Taught of God* to *Know more*. The *best Scholars* are they that have *Learned* to be *Readiest* at their *Prayers*. And such as *best Know* themselves will be *most forward* to *Humble* themselves before the *Lord*, and *know how Good* it is for them to *Draw nigh unto God*. And none must forbear their *Prayers*, because they be not *fine Speakers*. But, *If any man lack Wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men Liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Jam. 1. 5. The *Silliest* wretch, by this means, may come to *Know enough*, to do his *Business*, to make him *Wise to Salvation*. Let the *Aged* Pray much, because they have but a *Little Time*, till their *Mouths* will be stopt: And *Cry mighty* to *God*, before they go down into the *Silence* of the *Grave*. Let them Beg of *Him* that *knows their Frame*, to have *Compassion* on their *Infirmiti- ties*, and not *Cast them away in the time of their Old Age, nor Forsake them when their Strength fails them*. Let them go *Praying* out of this *World*, that they may come *Praising* into the *Next*.

Next. Let *Children* in their youth, Remember who *Made* them; and Pray That as they grow in *Age* and *Stature*, they may also grow in *Wisdom*, and *Grace*, and *Favour with God and men*. Let them learn to Pray *Betimes*, that Use may get them a *Habit*, and facility of Praying. And if their Prayers be well meant, (tho *Childish*,) He will not Despise the *Young Childrens* Prayer, who gives even to the *Young Ravens* that *Cry*. Psal. 147. 9. Let the *Weak* and *crafy* Pray, for *Power from on High*, to Him that giveth *Power to the Faint*, and *increaseth Strength to them that have no Might*. And let the *Strong* and *Lusty*, Exert their Strength and mettle in this Spiritual *Conflict* and *Struggle*, and not be Slothful in the *Work of the Lord*, but do it with all their *might*. Because they know not what a *Day may bring forth*, to Disable and pull them down. Let the *Infirm* Christians Pray to be *Healed*; and the *Fallen*, to be *Recovered*; the *Doubtful* and *wavering*, to have their *Faith increased*: And let the *Faithful* and *established* Pray, That they may be *Thankful to God*, and *Helpful to men*, and go on to *Abound in the Work of the Lord*.

In a word, let men of all Ranks and Estates *Pray*, Because they *May*, and because they *Need* it. Because they are *Nothing*, and *Have nothing*, but of the *Divine Bounty*: And can do nothing without God's *Heavenly Grace*, and are *Presumptuous* to look for that *Grace*, without their

their *Prayers*. They deserve to go for ever without it, and justly do perish for *Want* of it, who will not be at so much trouble as to *Seek*, but *Lose* all for want of *Asking*. All the *Noise* and *Bustle* in this *World*, at the last, will *Centre* and be summ'd up in *Prayer*. And every one that is not *Stupid* or *Mad*, will covet to go *Praying* off the present *Stage*. Whatever else then a man has to do, he is but an impertinent *Trifler*, whoever he be, that doth not every day addict and use himself to this *Service*, to make one of the number of God's constant *Operators*.

S E C T. II.

What Liberty have Sinners to make their Prayers.

THAT *God Heareth not Sinners*, is true of all *Impenitent*, *Resolved Sinners*, so persisting. For why should he be at their beck, to Hear them calling upon Him for *Mercy*, who make no *Conscience* to *Hearken* to Him, calling on them for *Duty*? *Quantum à præceptis, tantum ab Auribus Dei.* Tertul. *He that turneth away his ear from Hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be Abomination*, Prov. 28. 9. More *Noisom* to God, than any *Stinking Breath* to us. He will not Hear, when the *Hands are full of Blood*. They must be *Holy hands* lifted up, to fetch down *Heavenly Blessings*. Nor will he Hear when

when the Heart is full of *Pride*. Who is inclinable to Give to a *Proud Beggar*? Any allowed Wickedness bars against us the best and only *Refuge* in the world. When our *Hearts* Condemn us for *Regarding Iniquity* in them, it Damps our Spirits, and Confounds our Faces, and Blasts all our Hopes of *Speeding*. The Prayer is like then to Return as void of *Success*, as it went empty of *Sincerity*. For should God Hear us, when we do not Hear our selves? Yea when we hear all his *Enemies* rather than Him? We must not think he is so obliged to our *Party*, or Charmed with our Forms of *Address*; tho we may seem to Pray as we *Ought*, when we take no care to *Live* as we Pray.

And yet it cannot be meant of *Sinners* in general without Exception, That God will not *Hear them*; For then he must Hear never a *Servant* of his that he has upon *Earth*; seeing all the World stands *Guilty before him*: *And there is not a Just man upon earth, that doth Good, and Sinneth not.* Who are they but *Sinners* that he bids Pray every day, *Forgive us our Trespasses?* He will *Forgive* many that know not how to *Forgive themselves*: And *Hear* even such as are ready to *Despair* of Audience. *Psal. 31. 22.*
I said in my hast, I am cut off from before thine eyes: Nevertheless thou Heard'st the voice of my Supplications, when I cried unto thee. How is it then? God will Hear some *Sinners*, and some he will not. *Presumptuous Hardned Sinners that Go on still in their Trespasses, He will not Hear,*

Nor

Nor Regard their *Prayers*, who Regard not his *Word*; but make the Prayers only a *Cloak* for their Sins, instead of a *Maw*, to break them off.

But *Repenting* and *Returning* Sinners shall not therefore fail of *Audience*, because they fail in their *performance*: Nor be Denied every thing which they *Would*, Because they discharge not every thing as they *Ought*. Tho we cannot say, *We have no Sin*, or are without offence; Yet if we *Fear* to offend, *He will Fulfil the desire of them that Fear him*. *Psal. 145. 19.* And tho we cannot make so streight paths for our Feet, as never to tread *Awry*, Yet if, as to the main, we walk in the *Uprightness* of our Hearts: *No good thing will be withhold from them that walk Uprightly*. *Psal. 84. 11.* Still there will be room enough left for his *Pardon*, even when we have done our *Best*: Yet will he not for that, stop his Ears, but *Hear in Heaven, and when he Hears Forgive*. *Elias*, I know was an Extraordinary Person, Tho the Apostle, tells us, he was (*Οὐγιοναδίς. James 5. 17.*) *Possible as we are*: and that with *Frailty of Mind*, as well as *Body*: For so the Venerable *Bede* glosses upon it. (*Et mentis Frazilitate, & Carnis.*) Yet he Prayed, and was Heard in what he Asked.

Some *Inherent Holiness*, indeed, we must have, to give us *Confidence towards God*, and to speak our *Interest* in the Holy prevailing

Advocate.

Advocate. Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, Because we keep his Commands, and do those things that are Pleasing in his Sight, 1 Joh. 3: 22. Yet we cannot ground our Hopes all upon our own *Holiness*: But must have a better *Name* and *Righteousness* than any in ourselves, where-withal to *Appear before the Lord, and Bow our selves to the most High God*. And He upon whose *Interest* and *Mediation* we go, is pleas'd to call to Him the *Labouring and Heavy-Laden*. They that feel themselves *Burthened* with their *Sins*, are the fitter to make their *Prayers*. The *Sense* of *Sin* is both the *Weight* to *Humble* them, and also the *Goad* to *Quicken* them: That they may think *Ill* of themselves, and be in good *Earnest* with God. Prayer is the *Pillar of Smoak* in which the Soul ascends out of this *Wilderness*, to God Above: Which tho it be *Black* as *Smoak*, for manifold *Infirmities* still adhering, Yet having a Principle of *Energy* and *Spirit* to carry it upward, The *Devout* Soul ascends therein, and by a *humble Familiarity* Converses and Parlies with God, even as *Abraham* and *Moses* did. Yea when our *Sins* are felt and Bewailed, we may draw even from them, a *Plea* why God should Hear us, for his *Glory*. For that he should Hear in Heaven, and do, and Grant the desires of *Sinful Dust and Ashes*, who can claim nothing, as due, at his hands: That he should Forgive us, who have so Provoked him, we deserve rather to be *Abhorred* than *Pardoned*: Reward

Reward *Unprofitable Servants*, Yea Regard *Ill-deserving Sinners*! O how much does this redound to the Honour of his *Name*, and illustrate his *Glory*? And what Encouragement have we, (even when Discouraged by our own Sinful Vileness,) to go and Strive and Plead with God in our Prayers, by the things which he most Prizes and Loves? That is, to Move him with his own *Glory*; to take the Motive from *Himself*, and to be Merciful to us *Sinners* for his *Name's sake*; And *arise and Help and Deliver us for his Honour*.

What Mean then the *Faint Hands and Feeble Knees*, when the God so Greatly Offended, will be so *Easily intreated*? And expects not that we should come to him without our *Sins*, But only with a Sorrowful *Concernment* for them, and a pious *Resolution* against them. And so even *Fools corrected with their own Wickedness*, are *Heard*. Psal. 107. 9. And the Wicked whose very Prayer is called *Abomination*, are yet put upon *Praying*, However they want Ability, they are not *Disengaged*, from paying the Debt; because that Inability is only thro their own *Fault*. And if they are *Sinful*, even in their Prayers, To leave them off, will not *Amend* the matter; but they would be yet more *Sinful*, without them. They may *Pray and Escape*, But if they *Pray not*, they are sure to *Perish*. And therefore St. Peter bid *Simon Magus* (who was in the *Gall of bitterness, and the Bonds of iniquity*,) *Repent and Pray God*, if perhaps the thoughts

thoughts of his heart might be Forgiven him. Acts 8. 22, 23. If there be but any Peradventure, it is good to be Adventurers here. *Je hoahaz did Evil in the Sight of the Lord, and yet he Sought the Lord, and the Lord Harkened to him.* 2 King. 13. 4. And what hath been, may be. As the Hand of God is not *Shortened*, So neither is his Mercy *Abated*, but still they are the *Same*, as ever they were. And Praying, being the using of Gods *Means*: In that very *Use* both our Persons and our Prayers may be *Sanctified*. But they that are not sensible enough of their *Adoption*, to cry, *Abba Father*, must yet repair to God, as the Common *Father of all*, for a better *Title*: and beg the Regenerating and Witnessing Spirit of Him, as the faithful Creator, with whom the *Fatherless* find *Mercy*. And however Unworthy we are, *The Lord our Righteousness*, who is Infinitely Worthy, *maketh intercession for the Transgressors*. Isa. 53. last v. And his *Interceding* is not by way of *Petition*, but as an *Advocate*, Pleading for his *Client*, of *Justice*, Because we have no Sins hanging upon us, but what he, to the full, has *Satisfied* for. And so they can be no *Bar* to our Prayers, when we are Interested in his *Merits*.

And thus the way to the Throne of Grace is *Open* to All manner of Persons. And Sinners, even the *Worst* are not *Excluded*, if they resolve not to *Continue in their Sins*, but are on the Penitent *Key*, and on the Parting *Point*. *He that Confesseth and Forsaketh his Sins, shall have Mercy.* [To which I may add, *He that Fears and*

and Prays, shall not Feel what he Fears and Prays against. God will never condemn that earnest Supplicant, who *Deprecates* the Evil which he dreads, and from a sensible Heart, thus pleads for the Life of his poor Soul, *From thy Wrath, and from Everlasting Damnation, Good Lord deliver me. What profit is there in my Blood?* The Damned nothing but Blaspheme and Curse thee: O let me live, that I may Bless and Praise thy Name. Let none then Debar himself of the *Liberty*, which our *Lord Allows* us all. But may every one lay hold of the blessed *Priviledge*, and be a *Petitioner*, waiting on the *Lord our God*, till he answer him in the *Wishes* of his heart. And O that we might have that once to say of every *Unconverted Sinner*, which was given as an Argument of St. Paul's Conversion, *Act. 9. 11. Behold, he Prayeth.*

*Lord I have Invited all,
And I shall
Still Invite, still Call to Thee :
For it seems but just and right
In my sight,
Where is All ; there all should be.*

Herb:

C H A P. VI.

*The Liberty of Prayer, as to the Persons
Prayed for.*

S E C T. I.

The Liberty of Praying For All.

OUR Blessed Lord in the first Word of his Prayer, teacheth us to Pray in *Love*, as well as in *Faith*: and to take in *Others* together with ourselves. And here we are to go as *Wide*, as before. None is Debarred from *Praying*. And we must Leave out None, in our *Prayers*. If we do not still *Name*, yet we must *Intend* them: And *Make Prayers and Intercessions for All men*. **I Tim. 2. 1.** Not only men of all *Orders* and *Sorts*, but *All* the men of every order and sort. Our *Charity* should be as *Extensive*, even as the whole Race of *Mankind*. Like *Fellow-Members* of the same Body, Every Member should have the same care one of another.

We are not indeed to Pray for the *Dead*, whose *Parts* are done, and their *Final Condition* already *Determined*. And it is equally idle and *Impertinent*, to Pray for that which *Already is*, and that which *Never shall be*. That is, the *Bliss* of those that are *Blessed*, Or the *Salvation* of those that are *Lost*. Yet O how many senseless

senseless *Maffes* are poured out upon this Account, and spilt in the Air? (Only that the Loss is not great, unless the *Stuffe* were more Precious :) by that *Church* which seems to have a great deal of *Leisure*, and little to do, To bestow so much Time, in Seeking to *Reverse* what God hath already *Concluded*. But tho the *Dead* can receive no manner of Advantage from it, Yet (like some other Points of *Popery*) 'Tis too Gainful to the *Living*, easily to part with it. The Friends *Departed Souls* can have no Feeling out of it; but the Priests *Living Bodies* feel the Comfort. And where the *Pay* is so Good, they are not agrieved to spend so much Breath in those kind of Prayers, that return in such *Golden Showers*, into their own Bosoms. And so it is indeed a Praying for *Themselves*, tho called Praying for *Others*.

But for the Salvation of all Men *Living*, we may Pray, because we are not sure but that all *Now Living* may be saved. They are *Probationers* and *Passengers*, upon their *Tryal*, and in the *Way*: *Candidates* of Happiness, and Seeking for it: And as far as ever any are now from it, we do not know but before they Dye, they may be brought into a Capacity of it, and *Attain* to it. And the bare *Possibility* of the thing is Ground enough for our Prayers: Which being the Effects of our Christian *Love*, and Charitable *Desires*, We shall be the *Better* for these Prayers, tho every one whom we Comprehend in them, is not.

And this we may look upon as a good *Omen*, and happy *Presage* of Reformation dawning, and a Blessed *Day* ready to break upon the *Church*, when Gods *Remembrancers* are Instant in Prayer, and Urgent, and Importunate with him for the *Transfusing* of a *New Life* into the *Dead Bones*, and Recovering Decayed Piety into a more Healthy, Hearty, and Flourishing condition. And how far soever things are gone, and how little Hope soever seems to remain of *Retrieving* them, Yet it is not in Vain, but to very good Sense, to *Remonstrate*, and offer the Matter to Him, who *Quickens the Dead*, and calleth those things that are not, as if they were. And who is pleas'd to make our Prayers the very *Condition* of his doing such great things for his *Church*. How few soever then we have with us here, and how Improbable soever it may be thought ever to see the *Deformed* Face of this Ungodly World changed into the *Beauties of Holiness*, Yet let us not be out of Heart, to Ask of Him, to whom *All things are Possible*; *Arise, O God, Plead thy own Cause*. That if all be not fully Accomplished strait to our wishes, we may have, at least, the satisfaction of seeing some Preparation and *Tendencies* towards the Long'd for *Revolution*; And the present evil World *Amended*, and Gods Truth and Holiness getting *Ground* in it. And in this Praying, we may take Encouragement, and go on in Hope of *Prevailing*; because it is for the thing which God himself Loves and Favours above

bove all, even His *Holiness* and his *Honour*. Such are the Requests he looks most Graciously upon, and gives the best *Welcome* to them that come to his *Gates* upon this Errand ; Not to crave the Pleasures of the Flesh, or the Greatness and Fullness of the World, But to beg *Grace* and *Godliness*, and to *Seek his Kingdom and the Righteousness thereof*. When his Glory is next our Hearts, and we are not concerned only *To serve a Turn*, Or to save our *Stake*, or set up our *Interest* or *Party* in the World. But that the *Name* of God may not be Blasphemed, nor his *Holy Cause* suffer, by the ungodly Opposers of it prevailing : That they may not be *Flushed* with Successes, to make them conclude themselves in the *Right* : Nor be let alone to Exalt themselves, and Ruine those, to whom the World is most *Beholden*, for its Continuance : Nor have cause to say, They have *Prevailed against Gods People*. And tho we are so Unworthy, we cannot hope to be Heard upon our own *Account*, Yet may we Pray in Faith and comfortable *Expectation*, That God will do the thing for his *Name's Sake*, which he has no reason to do for *our Sakes*. When it is no other Cause but his *Own*, which we commend to his *Care* : That the *Cause* may not be spoiled for us *Sinners* : but that we *Sinners* may rather be *Spared* and *Preserved*, because we Profess the *Gospel-Truth*, and stand up for *Pure Religion*, and *undefiled*, and *Protest* against the *Idolatries* and *Tyrannies*, and *Superstitions*, and *Abominations*,

which a corrupt Set and *Faction* has Introdu-
ced, to *Adulterate* and defile it. With this *Suit*
we may go boldly to the Throne of Grace, *A-
rise O God, let not Man prevail.* How long shall
the Wicked Triumph, and the Adversary Re-
proach? What wilt thou do unto thy great
Name? O let the Wickedness of the Wicked come
to an end, but Establish the Just. O Continue thy
Loving-kindness to them that Know thee, and thy
Righteousness to the Upright in heart. Where-
fore should the Heathen say, Where is their God?
Shew thy marvellous Loving-kindness, thou that
savest by thy right hand, them that Trust in Thee,
from those that rise up against them. Let all
those that Seek thee Rejoyce and be glad in Thee:
And let such as Love thy Salvation say continu-
ally, Let God be Magnified, who hath Pleasure in
the Prosperity of his Servants. Return we be-
seech thee O God of Hosts, Look down from Hea-
ven and behold, and Visit this Vine, and the Vine-
yard which thy Right hand hath planted, and the
Branch which thou madest strong for thy self. A-
rise and have mercy on Zion. And Redeem Is-
rael, O God, out of all his Troubles.

Thus Large Souls go big with the Care of
all the *Churches*; Yea take in them that are
Without too, and so help to Bear up the Pillars
of the earth. This is that *Publick Spirit* which
sets the Charitable good Man to Seek not only
his own, but the Happiness of all the *World*.
And how Large soever is the *Request*, he knows
the *Power* to which he Addresses, is *Able* to
effect

effectit: And thinks not he hath said *Our Father*, as he ought, till he has Recommended the Wants and Distresses of all the Partakers of his *Nature*, to the Great *Parent* of the *Univerſe*. Thus he *Obliges* unknown Multitudes, that lye without all *Lines* of Communication, but that of his *Prayers*: And is Kind to mighty Numbers that never saw his *Face*, nor knew of *such a one* in the *World*. Thus he Sayls and *Trafficks* for the *Publick Good*, not only to the Ends of the Earth, but quite up to the *Heavens*; And comes back fraught with the rich *Merchandize* of all Blessings from Above; to make all that dwell on this *Mighty Ball*, Gainers by his *Commerce* with that *Kingdom*, where all the *Treasure* lyes.

Yea thus the poorest *Subiect* may make his *King* and *Country* Beholden to him, for *Deprecating* Judgments; and *Praying* down Mercies upon the *Publick*. Thus the *Supplicants* that Wait upon Gods Throne, not only Deliver their own *Souls*, but help to Save *Nations*, 2 Chron. 7: 14. *If my People that are called by my Name, shall Humble themselves and Pray, and seek my Face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I Hear from Heaven, and Forgive their Sins, and will Heal the Land.* Such a man the Lord fought for, Ezek. 22. 30. *That should make up the Hedge, and Stand in the Gap before him, for the Land: that he should not Destroy it.* And because he found none, (And then the Case is Sad indeed, when we are left to com-

plain, as Isai. 64. 11. *There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee.*) Therefore he pour'd out his Indignation, and Consumed them, v. 31. By which it appears, both how Acceptable such *Intercession* is to God. (He Seeks for the *Intercessor*, and does not Blame a *Poor Creature* for taking so much upon him :) And also how *Available* is the Righteous mans Prayer, not only for himself, but for all his *Neighbours* far and wide, *Elias*, (*the Chariot and Horsemen of Israel*) with the Opening of his Mouth, could *Shut* and *Open Heaven*. Jam. 5. 17, 18. And upon the earnest Intreaty of *Moses*, in behalf of a provoking People, 'Tis said, Exod. 32. 14. *The Lord Repented of the Evil, which he thought to do to his People.*

This is the best of all *Friendship* to our Friends, To be thus *Concerned* and *Imployed* for them. Yea thus we may do *Good* for *Evil*, to them that will not *Thank* us for it: *Praying for them that Despightfully use, and Persecute us:* And so lay up for ourselves better *Rewards* than their good *Words*. And thus we shall be the most Welcome *Physicians*, and dearest *Comforters* to the *Sick* and *Miserable*, and get them that Help from *Above*, which all the World cannot Give. In the failing of all other *Means*, thus we may *Engage* Him to come in to their *Succour*, that *Knows how to Deliver*, and is never at a *Loss*, to do whatever he *pleases in Heaven and in Earth.*

Such

Such a *Latitude* and *Liberty* is allowed to our Prayers, even as Wide as the *World*. So easie may we take in *All* with ourselves: and in so doing, *Benefit* them, without *Impoverishing* ourselves. For he whom we Pray to hath Infinitely more than to Supply us all. And if there were Thousands of *Millions* more to be Saved, *Heaven* would be as much to them *every One*, as if each had *All* to Himself. This is the true *Christian Spirit*, Not only to *Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*, but to Seek the *Enlargement of Christ's Kingdom*, and to Pray that it may *Come*, in the Best and Fullest sense.

But such as glory most in the big *Catholick Name*, yet shew the *Least* and *Narrowest* Souls, in *Confining* Salvation only to their own *Self*. And instead of Praying for their Neighbours, *Cursing* and *Damning* all the *World* beside themselves. Wherein the *Papists* are even with the Profane *Hectoring Ruffians*, who have no Prayer so common, as, *God Damn ye*. But for ought I know, the *Curses* are as good as the *Prayers* of such an *Unchristian Church* and *Spurious Mother*, that is all for *Dividing the Child*, and *Destroying the Lives and Souls*, which Christ came to *Save*. Yet however they *Curse*, Let us *Pray*; First for our selves, That we may be *Saved* from them, and not be *Like* them: And then for Them, That they may once get from under the *Toke* of their wilful *Bondage*, so contrary to the *Liberty* of the *Gospel*, wherein Christ hath set us *Free*: And not be so *Stingy* and *Penurious*

Penurious in their Charity, but let the *Damning* alone, for their own *Sakes*, as well as ours: Lest, as they *Judge*, they find the Judgment turned against *themselves*, by Him to whom *Vengeance* and the Pronouncing of Final *Sentences* belongs.

S E C T. II.

The Liberty of Praying for Wicked Men.

THE Lord of *Love*, who Breath'd out his *Soul* in Praying for the cruel Enemies, that shed his *Blood*, Yet held back his *Prayers* for many, that seem'd as much to *Need* them. Joh. 17. 9. *I Pray not for the World*, saith He. That is, The World, as opposed to them whom the *Father Gave him out of the World*. And so far we are to be *Followers of Christ* herein, as not to Pray for Pardon and Heaven, to the *Impenitent* and *Unbelieving*, so *Continuing*: Nor to ask for them those same things which belong only to the *Elect* and dear *Children of God*. But yet we must not *Exclude* all out of our *Offices*, whom God hath Excluded the *Book of Life*. Tho *Christ* might, Because he Knew who they were, but we do not. And all the *Psalrists Imprecations* against his, and Gods Enemies, (If we read them in the *Imperative Mood*, which the *Learned* observe may be read in the *Indicative*: and then they are *Predictions* of what should Befall them, and not *Prayers*

Prayers for such *Curses* to light upon them;) They are no Rules to us, because we have not the *Spirit of Prophecy*, as that Eminent Servant of God had, to *Foresee the End of such men*. The like may be said of St. Paul's *Imprecation on Alexander*, 2 Tim. 4. 14. *The Lord Reward him, according to his Works*. Dr. Hammond says, the best *Manuscripts* read (Ανοδωει) *The Lord Will Reward him*. And so the *Syriack* and St. Aug. according to *Eustius*. And if otherwise, Then it was a *Denouncing* of God's righteous *Judgments* upon an *Incorrigible Offendor*, in a Notorious case, of which the *Apostle* had Assurance. And till we can attain to the like *Knowledge* of any, We must be *Cautious* how we make so Bold. *If any man see his Brother Sin a Sin which is not unto Death, He shall ask, and he shall give him Life for them that Sin not unto death. There is a Sin unto Death, I do not say that he shall Pray for it.* 1 Joh. 5. 16. This looks like a *Prohibition* of our Prayers for some *Sinners*. And sure we are not to ask God's *Pardon* for any *Impenitent Sinner*, so *Persisting*. But upon Condition of that *Repentance*, which we are to Pray, that God would *give them*. Nor should we be unkind to Ungodly men, did we Pray, That they might find such *Shame* and *Affliction*, as God knows Conducing to their *Conversion*. The seeming *Bad Wish*, is the *Happiest* thing that could befall them: And that *Evil day* would be the *Best Day* that ever came over them. But tho we are not to ask God's *Pardon* for such as finally

finally *Persist* to Sin, in *Despight of the Spirit of Grace*, and without Repentance; if so be, that we *Know it*: (For that were to ask what his Word assures us, shall never be:) Yet where we cannot Know this without *Revelation*, We had need be *Wary*. And better far to Err in the *charitable Extream*, than in the other. All Sin in its own Nature is *Deadly*. But yet all that is *Mortal* doth not *Kill*, thro the *Divine Mercy*: And it proves *Not unto Death*, thro *Christ's Remedy*. No Sin so *Deadly*, but shall be Pardon'd to the *Penitent*. And therefore we must Pray for all as *Pardonable*, till we are sure of the *Contrary*, as to any. Our rash *Censoriousness* may as much *Wrong* others, as *Harm* ourselves. But our kind Prayers, even for such as they can do no *Good*, yet will do us no *Hurt*. Yea we shall be the *Better* for our *Charity*, tho they be never the *Better* for it, Thro a *Bar* which themselves put in the *Way*. Let us not then scruple to Extend our *Litanies* as far as ever there is a man *Alive* to receive the *Benefit*, Beseeching the Good Lord, *That it would please him to have Mercy upon All men.*

The Close of the First Part, Justifying the Liberty pleaded for.

THUS for the *Matter and Manner, Time, Place, and Persons*, we are at *Liberty* for *Prayer*.

Prayer. Not tied up, to move only as *Puppets* in a Frame : but may walk at Large, as the *Lord's Free men*. Let *Papists* call us *Libertines*, because we challenge a Share in our Blessed *Saviour's* Purchase made for us. We are not at Liberty, so to Part with our *Liberty*. But must rather *Resist unto Blood*, than make ourselves *Underlings* to Unreasonable and Cruel men : Such as would bind us, under pain of *Damnation*, As to Believe all that their *Church Says*, So to do all, as their *Church Requires* ; tho God's Word, as well as our own Reason, tell us we are *Misled*. Those of a *Bigotted* Humor, void of the truly Pious Temper, shew little or no Religion, but in the blind, Hair-brain'd *Hectoring* for the Shells and Shadows of Religion : For that *Formal* Religion which at best is but like the fine *Birds Skin stuffed*, without any *Life* in it. When as indeed the Heavenly Beauty of Religion is *Within*, however the Outward Dress is not to be Wild and *Slattering* : Yet it must not be so *Strait lac'd*, to bind and Fetter us, instead of *Expediting* our Motions, in Drawing nigh to God.

It is not *Christianity* but *Bigottery*, to Neglect the most *Weighty* things of God's Law, as if *Indifferent* : And the while to Plead for things *Indifferent*, as *All in All*. Like those whom *Socrates* the Historian tells us of, that held *Fornication* a thing *Indifferent*, *Lib. 5. c. 21.* But Tugg'd for a *Holy-day*, as if their *Lives* had lain upon it. Our hearts may be

be *Free*, in spight of all *Assuming Powers* in the World. Nor need we so much Perplex our Consciences about the *Ritual Religion* : As if by *Strictness* in such Lesser matters, we thought to *Compound* for our Carelessness in the *One thing Necessary*. Never must we set any *Humane Laws*, to *Rival* and *Top* the *Divine*.

The Submission to Just *Authority* in all Lawful things, is no *Infringement* of our *Christian Liberty*: Which we are not so to Dote upon neither, as if we thought even our own Cloaths *Abridg'd* it : But may preserve it still Good and fair to *Ourselves*, even then when Prudence holds us in, from Flourishing with it *Before men*. As long as we do not tie up ourselves to the Observation of *Humane Institutions*, as things in themselves *Absolutely Necessary*, We may obey for *Conscience Sake*, and yet keep our Consciences as *Free* in the *Sight of God*, as if we did none of the things Prescribed by men. While we make them no Parts of our *Religion*, nor believe them *Necessary* to *Salvation*. And yet thô we know the things to be *Indifferent*, we look not upon our *Obedience* as *Indifferent*; when as nothing is *Commanded*, contrary to what *God* has *Commanded*. And being thus Right in our Opinion and Apprehension of things, and not Slaves to our own *Conceits*, We are at *Liberty* still *Enjoyed* to ourselves, for all our *Deference* to *Ecclesiastical Appointments* for *Decorum* and *Order* in the *Church*. Our *Thoughts* and *Judgment* are *Free*, even when our *Practice* is under some *Restraints*.

Restraint. And thô we do the *same things* as others, It is at our Liberty whether it shall be with the *same Mind*. None can hinder, but we may *Think* as we please.

Now in all this my Endeavour has been to *Open* and *Smooth* the way to the *Throne of Grace*. That no Well-dispos'd Pious Soul may be dis-
couraged in its Approaches to that *Sweet Retreat*, but find all Encouragement, Freely and Cheer-
fully to *Draw Nigh to God*, without a *Servile*
Dread: Discharged from those fluctuating
Doubts, and Entangling *Conceits*, wherewith so
many are turmoil'd and kept *under Hatches*,
even all their days, To *Interrupt* them in the
course of their *Religion*, to make their Offices
their *Torment*, to disturb the *Serenity* and *Quiet*
of their Minds, and to spoil all the *Comfort* and
Sweetness of their *Devotion*. While they drag
on so *Heavily*, as Strangers to the *Spirit of Adop-*
tion, and have a Hundred *Rubs* and *Frights* in
the way. When as their *Prayers* should be their
Free-will Offering, and the *Festival Entertainment*
of their *Lives*, and their *Souls* should run as
oiled Wheels, upon the least *Touch* of God's
Attraction, when he Moves them to *Seek his Face*.
For tho' he *Draws*, he doth not *Drag*, but
(Βελόμενος ἐλκει. Chrys.) Carries such along, as
are Willing to *Run after him*, and do *Give*
themselves to Prayer, Not as *Compell'd*, but in
Love to the Work, and *Delighting to do the will*
of God.

The End of the First Part.

T H E
L I B E R T Y
O F
P R A Y E R,

Guarded from
LICENTIOUSNESS.

P A R T. II.

[*Si de Veritate Scandalum sumitur, utilius
Scandalum nasci permittitur, quam Veritas re-
linquatur. Greg in Ez.*]

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P A R T. II.

The T R A N S I T I O N,
To obviate Bigots, and prevent Mistakes.

I have offered to the Worshippers of God all the *Liberty* that can reasonably be Desired : And yet no more than I take the *Gospel* of our Lord to have *Given* and *Granted*. No more than the *Liberty of the children of God*, Who are to move Freely, as an Ingenuous Generation, and a *Willing People* : and not to be hamper'd like *Slaves*, under the *Yoke of Bondage*.

But from men of *Narrow Souls* and *Stingy Principles*, (that are under the power of false Notions, and bound up in *Superstitious Fetters*,) I expect hideous *Outcries*, of *Loose Doctrine*, and a door opened to all *Abomination*. I hear and Smile, when I know some of the great *Libertines* in Practice, to be the most Nice and *Straight-lac'd* men, for certain Modes and Opinions. They can make bold to take all *Loose Liberties* in their Conversation and Manners, and go so far this way, that they must be men of *Large Consciences* indeed, and have as Little of God's holy *Fear*, that dare venture

to *Follow* them. And yet at the same time, and in the midst of all their *Rants* and *Excesses*, who more hasty to find great fault with much *Better* than themselves? And make heavy Complaints and *Tragical* Exclamations of the insufferable Boldness and *Laxity* of all that are not such high *Observers* of Times and Places, Words and Forms, Gestures and Customs, as themselves, Nor jog along just in their very *Mode*. As if every one had lost his way, and none could possibly be *Saved*, that did not exactly *like* them. Whereas, God help them that *do*. And how much worse and sadder would it be with the World, than it is, if we had no better *Patterns*?

But what then? Is it come to this pass for *Tolerations*, That men may *Pray* or *Forbear*? Or do it *When* their list, or *How* their List? and never trouble their Heads about the matter, nor have any care in their Hearts, either to discharge the *Duty* at all, or to do it in an *Acceptable* manner? God forbid! Tho' we propose an *Inch*, where some will allow no more than a *Hairs breadth*: Yet that none may take the *Eln*, when but an Inch is given, That the *Large* Bounds may not be shamefully Stretcht into a *Boundless* Extravagance: We must throw some checks and *Limitations* in the way of Loose and careles Sinners: To teach them how to behave themselves as *Free*, without abusing their Liberty for a *Cloak* of such Naughtiness. And as we have shewed how far it is that they *may*

go, So we are now to tell them, Where they
must stop and *Go no further.*

C H A P. I.

S E C T. I.

The Licentiousness Not to Pray at all.

NO T only the Command of God, but the Necessity of our case, puts us upon *Prayer*. And there is so much Good to be got by it, that we are the worst Enemies to ourselves, when we Neglect it. Yea we betray ourselves to be *Bastards* and not *Sons*, when we do not *Give ourselves unto Prayer*. For God hath never a *Dumb Child* in his Family. Tho' all are not alike Accomplished, the least knows how to cry *Abba Father*. As the silliest Beggar knows how to tell his own Tale, to move Pity, and get a Peny. As soon as St. *Paul* was a Convert, he was a *Supplicant*. Act. 9. 11. And all God's People are called *The Generation of them that Seek him*. Psal. 24. 6. Yea even such as we condemn for *False Worship*, will rise up in Judgment, to condemn the *Neglecters* of all Worship. Whose own *Hearts* indeed cannot chuse but aforesight Condemn them, if they have any Life and Sense in them, and are not such as the Apostle calls *Past Feeling*. But Some think to Have all, and

Do nothing. They would be *Christians*, no one knows how. They would *Fly* without *Wings*, attain the *End*, without *Means*, *Enter the Straight Gate*, without *Striving*, Convey themselves whether they please, and never *Travail*. And so *Condemn the Generation of God's Children*, for Spending their Strength For *Nought*, and Labouring all in Vain. *Wherfore is all this Waste?* What need so much ado? To Read, and Hear, and Muse, and Watch, and Fast, and Pray, and Mortify our Lusts, and Deny ourselves, and *Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling?* But such Despisers of all Religious Offices, as reckon themselves the brave Folks, so much *Aforehand* with the holy Followers of *Jesus*, and make but a *Game* of their serious Diligence, will once sadly wish they had born them Company, and find their *Mistake*, when it may be too Late for *Remedy*. When their *Short Cuts* have left them Short of *Heaven*, they ^{will} find what they counted the *Round-about way*, was the Next and Best, and Only Way to the Blessed *Home*. For this World is made for *Business*, and here we must Labour, if hereafter we would Enter into that *Rest* which *Remains for the People of God*. This way all such as *Dyed in the Lord* went thither. But what should they make account to *Rest from their Labours*, who were never us'd to *Watch unto Prayer*, nor to *Strive*, and take any *Pains* in it? As Buisy as ever they might be otherwise, *Labouring for the Meat that Perisheth*, will not serve

serve the turn, to bring men to *Everlasting Life*.
One thing is Needful, And the main of it lies in
Prayer. For we cannot do what we should
without God's *Grace*, and he will not give it,
without our *Prayers*. Still we are bent to *Back-
sliding* from Him, and Prayer *Retrieves* and
fetches us back to Him. Natural Corruption
is the *Dead Weight*, still pulling down the Heart
to the *Dust of the Earth*: But our Praying is
like Winding up the *Clock*, to set and keep it
going. This then must be the constant Employ-
ment of our Lives: and we can never do well
without it: Our case is ~~so~~ far from Hopeful,
when we have thrown off the *Care*, and lost the
Conscience of it. Thô there should be nothing
scandalous upon our Names, Yet the very *With-
holding* of Prayer is enough to Undoe us: And
this it self is a dreadful Prognostick of Ru-
ine, When we have not Power or Heart
so much as to Cry for Deliverance from
the *Wrath to Come* Horrible is like to be
the End of the *Prayerless* generation. Such
as will not Call upon God in the *Day of
Grace*, they shall in vain Cry to him in the *Day
of Wrath*: and find him then as *Deaf* to them, as
before they were *Dumb* to Him: Never offering
any hearty Supplication to God, till just he
came to do Execution upon them.

S E C T. II.

Of such as Withhold Prayer out of Perverse-
ness.

IT speaks the *Excellency* of Prayer, That the Devil has so many Fetches to keep People from their *Prayers*. He knows them to be the grand *Battery* against all *Infernal Powers*, That when we turn from him, to Fly this way to **G**od, we get out of his Reach, and he can do us no *Hurt*. Therefore if he could possibly by any means, he would *Hinder* our Prayers. 'Tis he that sets men Perversely to *Cavil* themselves out of the greatest *Priviledge* in the World, By *Sophisms* and *Fallacies* drawn from the immutable *Decrees* of God, and the *Vanity* of Opening our case before Him, who *Knows* all better than we can tell him, and who lets them fare as well at his *Hands*, who use *No Prayers*, as those that daily load his *Altars*.

It's true, God is the *Lord that Changeth not* : but will do all his *Pleasure*, However we Wish this and that, according to *Humane Affections* ; And the design of our Prayers, is not to make an *Alteration* in Him, but in ourselves : Not to *Incline* him to our *Interests*, but to bring us to his *Terms*. When our Boat is fastned at the Rope's end to the Bank, we cannot (by pulling never so hard,) make the Shore stir to come to us ; but we may by that means, bring our Boat to

to the *Shore*. And that is enough : We have our Design, if they come *Together*. We can never Alter the Eternal Purpose of God, with all our *Prayers*. But yet in the use of his *Means*, we may bring about our *Salvation*, *According to* his Purpose. For he hath Appointed none to the *End*, without the use of *Means* to bring them thither. And if thou wouldest find that thou art in a good *Hopefulness* for the *End*, Thou maist make out that, by a Seasonable and Earnest *Application* of the *Means*. Thou canst not be of God's *Council*, Yet be sure, it is to some purpose for thee to *Obey* his *Commands*. He *Commands* thee to *Pray*, And thou maist be *Confident*, He would never Enjoin an *Impertinent* thing. He would never bid thee *Ask*, *Seek*, *Knock*, if it Signified nothing at all for thee to do so.

We are told of some *Doctrines* that spoil all *Preaching*, and of some that destroy all *Praying*. ('Tis easy indeed for a man of *Wit*, to Load with *Absurdities*, any *Doctrine* he is *Prejudic'd* against.) But were it so, that I must needs adhere to the one or the other, For my part, I should rather chuse the *Doctrines* that *Enervate Sermons*, and Stain the *Pride* of man's *Glory*, Than those that *Vacate Prayers*, and cloud the *glory* of that *Grace* by which we are *Saved*: and that not of *Ourselves*, it being the *Gift of God*. And herein I am proud to agree with our sweet and Excellent *Poet*, where he thus declares,

— I value Prayer so,
 That were I to leave all but One,
 Wealth, Fame, Endowments, Virtues, all
 should go,
 I and dear Prayer would together dwell,
 And for each Inch lost, quickly gain an Ell.
 Herb.

But St. Paul, that zealous *Assertor* of God's Free Grace, (*Gratia Specialis Pugil.* Bradward.) did not think it an *idle* Exhortation, when he call'd on his People, *To Work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; Tho' at the same time he told them, *It was God that workt in them to Will and to Do, of his good Pleasure.* Indeed, if I must speak my own Sense, I cannot but think my self the more *Concerned* to live and keep in his holy Fear, when I believe all that ever concerns me, lies in his All-disposing *Hands.* And I count it to very great and good Purpose, to Beg hard of Him for his Gracious *Aids*, without whom *I can do Nothing.* I shall leave them who think nothing is to be *Askt*, which is given *Absolutely*, by virtue of God's *Decree*, to consider what room they leave for their Prayers: When as themselves hold, That God has *Absolutely Determined* to give to every one Grace *Sufficient* to Believe, and upon their Believing, to Endure to the end and be Saved: And that beyond this Sufficient Grace, Nothing is to be *Sought of God*, only they are to exert the Power

Power received, and to *Stir up the Grace of God that is in them*. And so according to their own declared *Sentiments* in this matter, What should they *Beg* for that, which they believe is *Antecedently Secured to them* ?

Again, I grant, that *God knows the whole of thy Case*, and how every thing is with thee, Better than thou canst tell him. But then thou art to remember, That the end of thy Praying is not to *Inform* God of what he does not Understand : but to *Dispose* and *Qualify* thee to receive what he has promised to *Give* : To perform the *Condition*, on thy part to be performed, To Humble thy Soul, and Raife up thy Heart, and Enflame thy Affections, and *Open thy Month wide, that he may fill it*. The Promise is, Mat. 5.6. *Blessed are they that Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled*. Now thy fervent Praying argues such *Hungering and Thirsting*, and so prepares thee for the Mercy, *Entitles* thee to it, and tends to *Assure* thee of it. But it is a *Tempting of the Lord thy God*, to expect his *Immediate Aids*, without thy use of his *Means*. And what if the Despiser of Prayer enjoy the *Fulness of the World*, and live in all Pomp and pleasure and Prosperity ? And the loose *Dives*, that Worships no God, but his *Fortune* and his *Belly*, is aforehand with many of God's daily *Orators*, for the Sweet and Brave *Accommodations* of this Life ? Be sure, *The World's Good* shall never do them any *Good*, who Snatch it *without God's Leave*, and devour his Comforts, without

without Asking his *Blessing*. For the Creatures are *Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer*. And the very *Blessings* are *Cursed*, to them that have them, without *Calling upon the Lord* for them. Who have them on easier terms, than the *Expence* of their *Prayers*, Or at least, do not so *Sanctify* them upon the *Receit*, shall have small *Joy* of them; but will find them instead of *Prosperous Gifts*, only *Temptations* and *Snares*. Better indeed Ask and not Receive, than Receive and not Ask. For *Prayer* coming between our *Necessity* and *God's Bounty*, keeps the good *Understanding*, and fair *Correspondence* between us and *Heaven*, which is an *Advantage* of the highest consideration. But then for the *Better things that Accompany Salvation*, (which are the *Childrens Bread*,) we must never expect them, till, we are qualified as *Children*, going to our *Father* for them. St. *Paul* calls *Isaiah* very *Bold*, to say, the *Lord was found of them that Sought him not*. Rom. 10. 20. However *Liberal* He is, to Bestow such *Favours*, Yet he is not *Prodigal*, to throw them away upon such as count them not worth so much as the *Asking for*. We shall not be *Saved*, if not *Sanctified*; Nor can we be *Sanctified*, without the *Spirit of God*; nor are we to look for that *Spirit*, without our *Asking*. Luk. 11. 13. 'Tis not to such as Slight him, but to them which *Ask Him*, That God will *Give the Holy Spirit*.

S E C T. 3.

Of Despising Prayer, out of Profaneness.

THE men of the best Rank are ambitious to attend in the *Kings Presence*, and much greater Honour it is to attend upon the *most High God*: Yet there are men too high to *Stoop* even to Him that *Made* them: and who scarce meddle with *his Name*, unless it be in their *Oaths*, and to Droll upon his *Word*, and Scoff at his *Holy things*. They know not how to Worship and Pray, and *Call on the Name of the Lord*: But they know how to Curse and Swear and *Blaspheme that blessed Name*, by which they are called. *Vile Bruits* ! that never Look up to the *Hand* from whence they Receive all: but go to and from their *Tables*, as their *Troughs*; and in and out of their *Beds*, as their *Sties*; without Asking of God's Leave, or taking any Notice of their great *Owner* and *Preserver*. So *Good Fellows*, that they will not break Company, and go *Apart*, thô it be to Seek the Face of the *Lord*, and to Enjoy God Himself. Their ungodly Living takes them off *Praying*, or else the *Praying* would take them off such kind of *Living*. Alas, what should they do with Him, who (they know) Hates all such *Workers of Iniquity*? He is out with them, and they care not then for Drawing Nigh to Him. Men Estranged from God are

are not for such kind of Company, as *Fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ*. For it is *Likeness* that breeds the endearing *Friendship*: But what *Communion hath Light with Darkness?* Where there is not first a *State of Nearness*, there are not to be expected any *Acts of Approximation*. Those *Ordinances of Worship* which are *Breasts of Consolation* to others, are but dry empty *Shells* to them. They find no *Savour of Sweetness* in 'em. And so all we must look to hear from such, is to have them *Scorn and Deride*, what themselves could never *Relish* or *Endure*. You shall hear from them, *Precise* or *Faction*, or some such Name of Infamy, if the *Slighty* way which most take up with, will not serve your turn. You shall be noted in the *Black Book*, or the *Black Mouth* of the Profane, for an *Intolerable Sort*, if you Dare not be *Like* them; but are for *Walking with God*, when they fly out all upon the *Ramble* of their Lusts. But if you must (after your *Saviour* himself,) bear the *Contradiction of Sinners*, You may *Rejoyce* it is upon so *Good* an account: If the main *Objection* against you, be your *Religion*, if you are Bark't at, for *Following God as dear Children*, and disturb'd in the very Way which his *Word* puts you upon, The *Quarrel* then is *His*, rather than yours: And when He is so *Able* to *Maintain* his own *Cause*, and to *Avenge* the *Affronts*, and make the *Despisers Behold and wonder, and Perish*, You may *Scorn* their

their Scorns, and Pity their *Malignity*: Understanding the *End* of these men, who *thro' the Pride of their countenance*, will not Seek after God: Who will one day Curse themselves and their *Stiffness*, and the time wherein they made so *Bold* with the Eternal Almighty *Majesty*, and still kept off from Him, and even set him at *Defyance*, and made a *Piſſ* and *Mock* at his Humble Service. God will hereafter be Ashamed of such impudent *Pretenders* to be Christians, as were now Ashamed, not of their *Sins*, but of their *Prayers*, and his *Worſhip*.

S E C T. IV.

Of Neglecting Prayer, out of Laziness.

MEN may not be so far gone in Ungodliness, as to *Cavil* against Prayer, nor openly *Affront* it: and yet take little or no Care duly to *Perform* it: Knowing nothing what belongs to Prayer, any further than now and then, to run over some *Forms* of course. And care not for any thing at all to do with it, but just to perform the *Custom*. Yet if they be not grossly Scandalous and Notorious, they think themselves Well enough to pass, tho' they make no Conscience to live, in a manner without *Prayer*. But to talk of a good Christian, not *Given to Prayer*, You may as well tell me of one living in good *Health*, without the use of *Food*. They that do not *Under-*
ſtand

Stand and Seek after God, Understand nothing at all, to do their Souls any Good. Let Men be what they will in other respects, it Blasts all the rest, and makes them stark naught, to be *Prayerless*. This the *Psalmist* makes the *Upshot* of all Baseness and Wickedness in the Worst of men, *They Call not upon the Lord*. Psal. 14. 4. And no wonder if God Leave them over to *themselves*, that so love to Live *Without Him in the World*. They are like to be *Banisht* for ever from him in the next World, who so little use or mind to Seek his *Face*, or come a near him, in this. Who think we must *Preach* them into Heaven, when they are so *Lazy*, they will not open their mouths to *Beg* for it. But alas, all *Sermons* are lost upon you, that do not bring you upon your *Knees*. The Word will avail nothing to found in your *Ears*, if you do not Pray it home upon your *Hearts*. The design of Preaching is to make you know your *Wants*, and where you are to be Suppli'd, and to direct you to the rich *Store-house* of all manner of Blessings, which Prayer is the *Key* to open. Preachers Unfold and apply the Word, to shew you your *Duty*, and to quicken you to it, and to send you unto God, to *Pray* for his *Grace*, to Enable you to perform it. You are early instructed in the Church Catechism, to *Know this*, *That you are not Able of Yourselves to do those things*, which are the several parts of your *Duty to God and Man*, *nor to walk in the Commands*

Commands of God, and to serve him, without his special Grace, which you must therefore learn at all times, to Call for by diligent Prayer. And if you take not this Course, you must needs have wretched, Lean, and Starved Souls. When as you cannot do the things that please God, without his Help, and he will not so Help you, without your Prayers. And O Good God ! what will such do, when thou shalt Visit ! Now they may Pray, and will not. And in the time of their Extremity, tho' they would Pray, they Cannot. Either they lye then *Stupid Lumps* of Flesh, Insensible of their Case, not seeing how Dangerous and doleful it is with them: Or when *Distress and Anguiſh* comes upon them, to awaken and rouze them, and make them cry out for Help, They may justly fear to be put off, and Rejected of the Lord, according to his Threat. *Prov. 1. 28.* and to have not only their Prayers *Despised*, bur their Souls *Abhorred*.

On the other side, Nothing is so Influential to make us Wise and Good, and Great with God, as our daily Corresponding with Him, who is *Infinite Wisdom*, and the *Chiefest Good*. Such a holy Habit of Worship and Prayer dresses us up for Glory everlasting, where we shall *Adore* the most *Blessed* Eternally. For this Life is as our *Apprenticeship*, to Learn our Trades, and train us up, to bear a Part with all the *Heavenly Host*. And Prayer

is Sweetness all the way, and Heaven at the End. O little do they know, who are Un-acquainted with it, what *Joys* they Lose, in keeping off from Him, in whose Presence is *Fulness of Joy*. Facility comes by *Exercise*, and the Sweetness is found by *Experience*. So that what was at first a *Task*, after becomes the *Delight*. And pious Souls would not be debarr'd of the *Priviledge*, for more than all this World has to Tempt them with. I conclude this with that of Bishop *Taylor*, *Sad is the condition of him that cannot Pray, Happy are they that can, and do, and Love to do it.*

C H A P. II.

Of not Praying in the Places meet for Prayer.

S E C T. I.

Of not Praying at the Church.

Musick in *Consort*, with the combined ^{Harmony} has a prevailing Influence: and *Joyn't Prayers* by their United force, are like to be most Moving and Effectual. To have gone with the *Multitude* to the *House of God*, was the thing which *David pour'd out his Soul in him to Remember*, when he was detained from *Zion*, and

and could not as formerly, Visit the *Assembly* of God's Worshippers. He Envied the very *Birds* of the Air, as enjoying a greater Priviledge than himself could be master of : The *Sparrow* and the *Swallow* that nestled under the *Sanctuary* ; while he , as a widowed *Turtle*, sate Mourning in the *Solitary* places. *My Soul Longs* , yea even *Faints*, says he, *for the Courts of the Lord*. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy House*, they will be still Praising thee.

A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thousand.

Psal. 84. 2, 4, 10. For this he so passionately Longed, *To Come and Appear before God*. Psal.

42. 2. This he so earnestly Begg'd of the Lord, Psal. 43. 3. *O send out thy Light and thy Truth, Let them Lead me, Let them bring me to thy holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles.* This was the *One thing* he desired of the Lord, and resolved to Seek after, *That he might dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of his Life: to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* Psal. 27. 4.

But now alas, where shall we find such *A man after God's Heart* ? How few such *Flaming Lights* in these last days, to warm the World into better *Devotion* ! Our *Church doors* are Open, but the *Doors of Mens Hearts* are Shut. God Bows his *Heavens* and comes *Down*, But they have somewhat else to do, than give him the *Meeting*. A *Friend* to be Entertained at *Home*, must excuse them, for Attending upon the Lord at *Church*. A little *Storm* of foul *Weather*, can soon Cool all their *Zeal*. Or

the very conceit of a small Journey, quite Tire out their *Devotion*. The poorest *Trifles*, their very Fancies and Petts, as well as Pleasures, shall serve turn to stop them from the *Church*, that would not be Enough to keep them from a worse place. O how Small a matter will turn such *Queasie* Stomachs against the *Food* of their Souls, which they have so little Love for? And they that are most *Behind hand* in their Souls Affairs, and have the greatest Need of all Men, to *Watch daily at the Gates, and Wait at the Posts of Wisdome's doors*, use to be the greatest *Truants* here, and the most slack and Listless of any, to Frequent the places of their *Improvement*, and duely to attend the Means and Helps that should do their *Souls* Good. Such as can worst afford to be *Absent*, are the most seldom *Present*. They will rather Expose themselves to the devouring *Enemy*, than come under God's *Banner*, and Hide themselves in the *Clefts of the Rock*, that his *Goodness may pass before them*. If they *must Worship Christ*, they will do it so, as none but *Himself* shall take Notice. Who does indeed take Notice, That they are *Ashamed to Own Him Before Men*: And so He will once *Disown* them before his *Father*, and all the holy *Angels*. The pretence is, They can do the businesse *as well* at their own Houses; when in truth, they are too *Stately*, or too *Lazy*, to come unto God's. But you must go to *His House*, if you expect the Blessing to come to your *Own*. For tho' Blessings

Blessings have their Rise in *Heaven*, they come to us thro' the *Church*. Psal. 134. 3 *The Lord that made Heaven and Earth, Bless thee out of Zion.* They shall appear before Gods *Judgment Seat*, to their *Confusion*, that will not appear at the *Mercy-Seat* of his *Temple*, in their *Devotion*. And the *Enemies* of *Churches* shall once have occasion to *Hate* them yet more, when they shall have another *Erection* at last, and *Rise up* in the *Judgment*, to *Testifie* against them. And that which they now bear as a *Burthen*, shall eternally load them with a heavy *Remorse*. When instead of catching all *Opportunities* to *Appear* before the *Lord*, they are ready to re-assume the hoggish *Gergesenes Request*, and *Beseech Christ to Depart out of their Coasts*. God knows how soon they may be *Punished* with their own *Choice*, and turn'd out of those *Churches*, which they so *Slighted*, when they had them. Yea they that are so *Humoursome* and *Wanton*, they will not *Worship* the *Lord* in the *Beauties of Holiness*, may fear to be for ever excluded that *Holy Place Above*, which this below' was to *Fit* them up for.

But there are who come to the *House of Prayer*, not indeed to *Pray*, but to *Profane* the *Sacred Place*, and *Affront* *Him* to his *Face* who there *Inhabits*. Sometime they give the *Church* their *Bodies*, when *Rome* or *Mammon* has their *Hearts*. The *Intention* of their coming thither, is not to *Seek* and *Enjoy* the *Lord*. (if they really believ'd *Him* to be in that *Place*,

they would less *Care* to be there: or not be so *Careless* of ordering themselves, when got thither;) But the Church is their *Theatre* to See, and to be Seen. There they can take their *Ease*, and *Divert* themselves: and not only *Gaze* about, but *Whisper* and *Laugh*, and make a *Merry Bout* even of that *Meeting*. They *Keep not their Foot when they go to the House of God*. Nor ever put off the *Shooes* of their carnal Affections, when to tread the *Holy Ground*: But carry even as if it were at the *Play-House*: As if they came but to Air a fine *Suit*: or to see how one is *Drest*, Or how another *Looks* or *Act*s: Which hath the best *Face*, or the gayest *Garb*: and to pick up matter for *Tattle* and *Story*: Or else to loll and fetch a *Nap*, and so *Deceive* the Time, and cast *Contempt* on the Service. The *Church* would be a *Jayl* to them, if they did not take the *Liberty* so to *Profane* it. They can never be *Glad in the House of Prayer*, but when they Mistake the *Errand* that should bring them thither, and find somewhat *Gamesome* and *Ridiculous*, to make them *Sport*. S. *Hi-
erom*, in an Epistle to one notoriously *Scandalous* for such *Irreverence in God's House*, crys out, (*Non possum ulterius progredi.*) I want words to reach the *Wickedness* of this *Abuse*, How then shall I undertake to *Express* it, as it deserves? May every one, in *Gods Fear*, beware of turning the *House of Prayer* into such a *Den of Thieves*, where *God* is robb'd of those *Hearts*,

Hearts, which are the only Sacrifice that he looks after: Or to turn the Temple into a *Stews*, where the fire of Lust flames above that of the *Altar*: And impudent *Goats* are Intreguing for their lewd *Amours*, instead of making their most humble and earnest Court to the Heavenly *Bridegroom*. In God's House let your thoughts be *Intent* upon God. The *Market* for Traffick, the *Hall* for Noise, The *Stage* for Vanity; but, (as *Moses* left the Multitude behind him, when he went up to the *Mount*, So) let all foolish Lusts, and youthful Gauds, and Worldly Interests be laid aside, when you *Enter the Gates of the Lord's House*. And let not the Coming to *Church* be a *Counterfeit*, but Real *Drawing nigh to God*: Nor only take on you to Serve Him, but worship *in Spirit and in Truth*. If you are none of the Scornfull *Deserters*, that help to make *the ways of Zion Mourn, and her Gates desolate*, neither be any of the rude *Intruders*, that tempt even the Stones of the *Sanctuary* to cry out of you, coming thither but to *Pollute* the Habitation of God's Holiness.

S E C T. II.

Of not Praying in the Family.

TH E Church is the *House of Prayer*, but not the *Prison*, to confine it within those Walls; nor the only House where Prayer is to

be made. It is vain to come unto **God's Houfe**, when you make no Conscience to *Pray* at your own. In the Word God Serves us ; In our Prayers , we Serve Him, or rather ourfelves upon him. And 'tis not what men appear *Abroad*, but how they carry the matter at *Home*, that is the main Trial of them. There they are apt to *Personate* others, Here they are *Themſelvē*, and make it appear, whether they would have **God**, or themſelves to be *Uppermoſt*. A *Prayerleſſ* Family is no better than a *Beaſt houſe* ; and indeed a *Den of Thieves* too, where God is robb'd of his *Tribute*, and all their Souls of the *Benefit*. O what *Masters* of Families are they, and how unworthy of that *Name* and *Post*, who will Pro- vide no better for *thoſe of their own Houſe*, but Juſtle out of doors, *Him* that has moſt to do there ? How can he walk in his Houſe with an *Up-right Heart*, who resolves not with *Joshua* , *I and my Houſe will ſerve the Lord* ? Doth any man think to keep up the dignity of his Place with *Huffing* and looking *Big* ? As if he were too goodly, to *Cringe* every day at **God's Footſtool** ? *Silly* as well as *Proud* wretch ! Whoever thinks to bear himſelf up, with a Credit *Uſurpt* at the loss of **God's Honour**, who will be ſure to make his *Despifers* *Contemptible*. When men Live together, as if they were *Aſhamed* to *Pray* together, or to take any notice , how they are all *Oblig'd* to the great *Benefactor*, whom they every one continually live upon ; They can scarce hold their *Countenances*, to make ſuch a *Mock*

a Mock business of it, to Bow the Knee to him in *Prayer*, whom they make so *Bold* with every where else : They so walk in their *Houses*, that we may ask in quite another sense than *David* did, *O when will the Lord come to them?* The ill *Education* and want of any good *Orders*, that is got into *Loose Families*, is the *Bane* of Church and State, and *Plagues* the World with such Mischiefs, as are the daily *Grief* of every *Sensible* heart.

But the *Zeal* which should be *Exerted* in this Service, how commonly is it turn'd against it ? Men *Ill affected* this way stand upon *Terms* with *Christ Jesus*, to *Reason* themselves from under his *Yoke*. They cry out *Imposition* and *Slavery* ! and Twenty *Evasions* to keep them off their Knees. 'Tis *Hyperdulia*, and wherefore is all this Waste ? And O how glad of any thing like an *Apology*, to Supersede the *Irksom* Implyment ? He that will but undertake to prove, That they may do as well without *Prayers* in their *Families*, shall Oblige them to be his Humble Servants, or any ones, rather than *His* that *Made* them. Nay he shall be even *Ador'd* as a Saviour, that comes to set them *Free*, where *God*, and some of his *Ministers*, would tie them up. The Preacher of such *Latitudinarian* *Doctrine* shall have *Espousers* and *Profelytes* in abundance. But who and what are they ? Any to Credit the cause ? Why all the *Swearers*, *Drunkards*, *Fornicators*, *Rude Ruffians*, and *Vile* *companions* of the neighbourhood are ready

dy to be his *Converts* and *Admirers*. For he speaks their very *Hearts*, and exactly fits their turns. All the *Scandalous* company whose *Carriage* puts them out of conceit with all pious *Offices*, and makes it a *Hell* to them, to draw nigh to the *Holy God*, They catch, with the greatest *Greediness*, that *Liberty*, which any of the *Sons of Corruption* offer them. When they shall be taught to Slight God with good *Warrant*: and to ask, Who shall *Confine* them, where the *Scripture* it self hath left them Free? But they that are so ready to stand off here, for want of an *Express Command*, are known too well, to be none of the *Tenderest*, or *forwardest* men, to *Follow the Lord fully*, where his *Word* doth speak out *Expresly*. When they are commanded to *Walk in the Spirit*, and by it to *Mortify the deeds of the Body*: Yet who more *Carnal* and *Loose* than they? By which we may too evidently perceive, That it is not so much out of *Conscience*, as for the *Belly-God*, that they plead and contend. They would have *Elbow-room* enough, to *Expatiate* after their *Lufts*, and a *Way in Latitude*, and *Ease*, and *State*, to *Heaven*, and not be *Limited* to that *Narrow way*, which they could never abide.

But doth not the *Holy Scripture* oblige us to *Serve* and *Honour* God in all our *Relations*? and to *Recognize* our common *Lord* in our *Joint*, as well as *Personal Capacity*? Not neglecting those *Conveniencies* which we have to *Adore* him? Then how can the *Householder*, with his *Family*, *think*

think themselves Excused ? If we are to Pray *Every where*, (that is fit for it,) Is the House in *Utopia*, no where to be found ? And shall we omit those *Inviting* opportunities , when we Dwell together, and Eat and Drink and Converse together, and yet not *Pray together* ? How can the Master reasonably expect *Homage* of his Servants, when he lets them not see him as careful to serve his *Master in Heaven* ? Men will not dispute themselves out of their *Meals*, and their usual *Refreshments*, because the *Scripture* doth not determine just *Where* and *When* and *How*, they shall Eat and Drink and Divert themselves. Nor will they ask, What *Text* binds me to go to such a good Friends *House* , and receive his Kindness ? Or to go to such a *Market* or *Fair*, to Buy and Sell and get Gain ? They can go *Without* a Command, and it's well, if they do not often venture to go *Against* the plainest Commands, for their Bodily pleasure, and their Worldly profit. And then what is wanting but the Spiritual *Appetite*, to Savour and relish the things of God's *Spirit*, as good a Stomach to the Food of their *Souls*, and as great a Concernment for their *Eternal Advantage*, to Determine their Choice and Practice this way ? And to make them flock as fast to the *Throne of Grace*, and to see that all their Houses be *Houses of Prayer*. A dear *Love* to the Service would be above all *Arguments*, in the World for it. And as soon as any are *Quickned in Christ Jesus*, and become *Alive unto God*, they will save us the labour of Persuading

suading them, to go and *Feast* their Souls with Him, and to join in the Sacrifice wherewith he is well-pleased.

Whatever *Short cuts* some may fancy to Heaven, and laugh at the *Round-about-way* of Morning and Evening Prayer: I never heard of any *Dying man* that was of that mind. How many then do sadly Bewail it, that they had not taken this course? So that the *Praying Families* are on the Surest Side, all must acknowledge: And they may be infinite *Gainers*: But for certain they can never *Lose* by this Service. When it looks like *Loitering* by the way, and Hindring their work, Yet they are about their *Heavenly Father's Business*. And he that Imploys them in it, will not suffer them to *Lose* ground by it. It stops them, but like a *Traveller's* Eating and Refreshing himself, to recover *Strength* for his Journey. And poor people that cry, they have not *Time* for it, may more truly say, They have no *Mind* to it. For they can find *Time* for many matters of less *Importance*. And they had better abate some *Gains*, and themselves be turn'd out of *Doors*, than grasp so much *Business*, as to *Justle* Prayer out of *Doors*. But indeed Prayers never made any *Beggars*, unless it be in that Sense, as is no *Damage* or *Disparagement* to any.

The laudable Usage of all *Well-govern'd Families*, To go to their *Prayers*, before they fall to, and after they have Finished, the *Business of the day*, cannot be *Confronted*, without a Proud Scornful Reflection upon the most *Judicious*, and the

the most *Pious* Christians in the World. When the Family comes together in the *Morning* and *Evening*, This is the most decent way of bidding *Good Morrow*, and *Good Night*. And such Families as *Give themselves to Prayer*, use to give also the best *Examples* in other matters, and shew that they are the likeliest of all to be in the *Right*. Indeed an ordinary Observer, (if any thing impartial,) may easily see the Difference that is Commonly between *Praying* and *Prayerless* Families. I say, *commonly*, for it is Possible, the Service may be kept up in a *Perfunctory*, heedless, and customary manner, without any Improvement to the Worshippers: But then the fault is not at all in the *Offices*, but in the *Way* of performance: And they are *Abused*, like many other Good things, that men often use, without doing themselves any Good in the *Use*, We may reasonably expect in the *Praying Families* to find the *Fear* and *Love of God*, and all *Honesty* and *Mercy*, and *Sobriety* and *Decency* to prevail and flourish: For the *Course* which they take Naturally tends to produce such *Effects*, and thro' God's Blessing, it usually proves *Successful*. But how little cause shall we see to admire the *Religion* of such as turn Prayers out of their *Houses*? And alas, What, to their *Credit*, do they bring in the *Room* of such Offices? Where shall you meet with such *Nurseries* of *Oaths* and *Brawls*, *Drunkenness* and *Lewdness*, *Cruelty* and *Knavery*? And who indeed can expect any other kind of *Fruits* among such, as Sow no

Pester?

Better? How shall they keep up the *Fire of Religion*, without any *Fewel or Blowing*? His *Grace* the late Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, (Whose Memory ought ever to live in this *Church* with all Honour, as indeed among the Best 'tis precious, and even such whose breath may be thought *Malignant* enough to Blast it, yet do but so betray their *Impotence* together with their *Vengeance*,) Upon some that would *Unchrist'n* him he has left such an *Ethnick Badge*, as will stick much longer to them, because they take the course every day, by *Proscribing Prayers*, to prove their Houses *Heathenish*, and themselves no better than a Company of *Infidels* under the *Banner of Christ*. As they pass in his great *Judgment* who tells us, in his *Sermon of Family-Religion*, That *Where the Worship of God, by daily Prayers, every Morning and Evening, is Neglected, He sees not, how any Family can in reason, be esteemed a Family of Christians, or indeed to have any Religion at all.*

And what a Contemptible *Head* is that of a Family, that hath neither *Eyes* to lead them in the ways of God, nor a *Tongue* to Speak for them at the *Throne of Grace*? If thou hast *Sense* and *Readiness* of Expression in other matters, What is it, but thy own *Wickedness*, when thou want'st it for *Prayers*? And if thou wantest *Gifts* and Abilities, why dost thou not make it up another way? By some *Substitute* in thy Room, or by some wholsom *Forms* to help thee out? When, (as the last named most Reverend

Author

Author observes,) *There are excellent Helps to this purpose, in the several Books of Devotion, calculated for the private use of Families.* That the thing may not be Neglected then, get it Discharged as well as thou canst, and that will be Accepted, by him who looks first on the *Willing Mind*, and where he sees that, *Despises not the Day of Small things*, but takes poor matters in good part, *according to what a man hath, or can procure, wherewithal to Appear before the Lord*, and make his Oblations to the most High God. Thus let every Houfholder think himself concern'd to lead his Dependants the way to the Throne of Grace. And let not the *Members* of Families here stand for *Cyphers*, but carefully bear their *Part* in this Service: Nor think it enough to be still *Present* at the Office, without a hearty *Concurrence* and *Joining* to Assist in it. That the Prayer of the Family may not be only a *Formality*, and some as *Licentious* in their *Doing* it, as others in leaving it *Undone*.

S E C T. III.

Of not Praying in Secret.

There are who concern themselves in no *Devotion*, any further than they have *Company*, and are carried with the *Croud*. As if they durst not Trust the *All-seeing Eye of God*, without

without Witness: Or like *Dead things*, could not Move, any further, than *Moved*: Or like *Press'd Soldiers*, would do Nothing, if they could tell how handsomly to *Avoid* it. But to Sound a *Trumpet* in the Streets, or to Pray *Aloud* in the *Closet*, with a desire to be Heard and Observed of *Men*, spoils all the expectation of Reward and Praise from *God*. The Heart knows its own *Bitterness*, and can best tell its own *Tale*: And if Sincere and Serious, it cannot be at Rest, till got *Alone*, to Pour out it self before the *Lord*. But this is none of the *Hypocrites* Care, who little regards what he is towards *God* in *Private*, So he can but Shew well before men *Abroad*. Or if he Prays *Alone*, it is but to be the Better thought of, by those who, he thinks, take *Notice*: Or only to get a little out of the *Dinne* of his *Clamorous* Conscience. Not drawn by the Heavenly Sweets of that Satisfaction and Comfort, which is to be found in *Secret Devotion*.

Somewhat indeed may thus be Offered at it, by those that are not *Right*. But such as are not at all *Us'd* to it, cannot chuse but be *Naught*. When they Worship but for Company and *Fashion Sake*, and if left to themselves e'ne let it *Drop* to the ground, it speaks such a *Shiness* to *God*, as betrays their Hearts, not to be *Right* with *Him*. For if he were the Beloved of their Souls, that had their *Hearts*, He would then have more of their *Company*. But when they Shun his *Face*, and at his Invitations to Come

to

to Him, they hang *Back* from him; Sure all is *to pieces* between Him and their Souls: And all the Service they are present at, together with others, is but meerly a *Forced Putt*, Because they know not how, for shame, to avoid it.

And thus, How many, for want of *Communing with their own Hearts*, and Retiring to Seek God apart, are *Strangers* to themselves even all their days? And (keeping in a perpetual *Round* of Pleasures, and Busines, and Company,) are so taken up, and otherwise *Engaged*, that they scarce ever come to know aright, How the case stands with their *Souls*. They that find no delight in *Closets* and Religious Retirements, but all in Pastimes, and Drinking-houses, and Jocose Company, and such men of the World as they can *Get by*, O what a Dark Busines, and Melancholly Task, in their esteem, is the *Withdrawning*, to enjoy *Communion with God*? They will sooner *Scoff* at it, than ever set themselves to *Seek* after any such thing. And then alas, What have they more than the *Husk* and *Shell* of Religion? Seeing the *Pith* and *Kernel* of all lies in making Conscience of *Secret Sins*, and *Secret Duties*: I say, making *Conscience* of them, and neither suffering the Private Prayers to be *Omitted*, nor yet going only, *pro forma*, to the Closet, and there making such a Busines of it, as *Domitian* of his going alone to catch *Flies*: But dwelling in the *Secret Place of the Most High*, Minding his All-seeing *Eye*

upon us, and Sitting down under the *Shadow of his Wings*, with a singular Complacence and Delight. *Secret Sins*, if they are in thy Delights, and thy Purpose to Stick to them, will spoil all thy *Secret Prayers*. But when thou art for having the Searcher of Hearts, to *Search and Try Thee*, that thy Heart may be approved unto Him, then shalt thou go Boldly to thy *Father in Secret*, and *See his Face with Joy*, and find such *Soul-Satisfaction* with Him, as shall for ever *Engage thee to be His*.

C H A P. III.

Of Licentiousness as to the Time of Prayer.

THE pious Soul Echo's to God's Call, Psal. 27. 8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my Face, My Heart said unto thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.* No sooner is the Motion made, but it is gladly *Embraced*, Nothing in the world is so grateful to a *holy Heart*, as such *Heavenly Correspondence*. But if wicked men make any *Overtures* of approach to the Holy God, they care not how *Seldom* they come anear Him; and when they must be Concerned with Him, they care not how *Soon* they have done. His *Day* which he has set apart for the purpose, it may be,

be, doth not fit their *purpose*. And tho' he bids them *Keep holy the Sabbath*, they have somewhat else to do, than to wait upon *Him*, and cannot a'while to be at his *Beck*. Let him be ready to receive them, yet they are otherwise *Engag'd* for that *Time*, and must put it off, till a more *Convenient Season*. Or if they pay any *Attention* upon the *Lord's-day*, that must *Attone* for the *Neglect*, tho' he hear no more of them all the *Week* after. *Sunday* is enough, they think they have *Served him well*. It shall be *When* they *List*, after their *Capricious Fancy*, and not according to his *Divine Appointment*. He says, *Now is the Accepted Time*, and *Hear his Voice To day*: But they think another time will *Serve the turn*, and *Hereafter* do as well, any *Idle Minutes* that they know not what else to do with. Still they would put off for the *Present*, what they have no mind to do *at all*. 'Tis but now and then a little, as they please, and as the *Toy* takes them, that they do any thing like *Serving the Lord*, and do it in such a manner, as if he must be much *Beholden* to them for it. They will not *Engage* in it, nor *Tie* to it, and be *Constant* at it. Only some little *Snatches*, and wide *Breaches* between. They cannot *Live a day* without their *Meals*, but tho' many days come between, they find no *Want* of their *Prayers*. The *Scripture* tells them not, How oft they shall Eat or Sleep, yet they have their *Set Times* for both *Meals* and *Rest*. But O where's any the like *Care* to *Secure* their *Prayers*! 'Tis

only in a *Fit*, or a *Humor*, or a *Fright*, that they are for Praying. And if they have any *Prayer-Times*, Yet how small a matter shall Break them ? and take them off, to serve their *Lusts*, or any one, or any thing, before the great *Lord of all* ? Only the *Scraps* and *Leavings* of the World and Flesh, shall be thought good enough for his Portion. They are not at Leisure to *Seek the Lord while he may be Found* ; but forget what he sent them into the world to do : and how soon they shall awhile to *Dye*, and a'while to *goto Judgement*, and a'while to *Abide by it*, in the Future state *Everlasting*. And amidst all their other Business, if they mind not the *One thing Needful*, above all, they had e'en as good have *slept out* their Time, as so *Bestir* themselves in the World.

I know , many of the *Labouring*, and *Busy* people use to complain, That their hands are so Full, and *Business* lies so hard upon them, they have not *Leisure* to do as they would, every day, in the Greatest and Best of all *Works*. So giving Intimations , what Mighty Matters we might expect from them, had they but the *Opportunities* which some others enjoy. Tho, alas, upon the *Lord's-Day* it self, when the fair *Opportunity* is offer'd them, and *Worldly Business* is out of the way, Yet even then they are so *Little less* to any other *Business*, and will find so many things to put off the earnest Attendance upon *God*, that they but shamefully *Confute* Themselves, and shew what little *Reality* is in their Pretensions. But be thy particular *Calling* what

it

it will, man, If thou dost not make it *Subservient* to the General, and *Abide in it with God*, to make him the *Alpha* and *Omega* of allthy Works, so as to have them *Begun, Continued, and Ended* in Him, Thou dost but *Labour in the Fire*, To Rise *Early*, and sit up *Late*, and Eat the Bread of Carefulness, and Grasp all the Time that ever thou canst, to make thy utmost Benefit of the *World*: Yea thou dost not only Weary thy self in *Vain*, but takest a deal of pains in this *World*, to *Undo* thy self for ever in the *Next*, As long as the *Lean Kine* so devour the *Fat*, and Earthly affairs, Eat up all the *Heavenly*, and *Worldly Impoyments* are thy Souls continual *Impediments*: So that thou makest Light of all the Lord's *Invitations*, for Eagerness to be gone to the *Farm* or the *Merchandize*; Thou wilt at last find it the worst and saddest *Bargain* that ever thou madest, so to *Gain the World*. When thou must needs have it, tho thou settest at nought *God* and thy *Soul*, for the *Sake* of it. Dost thou think it such a *Needful* work to make *Provision for the Flesh*? Be it granted, that thou maist in due Time and Measure, *Care* for thy Body: But then if that may be done, Remember still that somewhat else of much more *Importance* must not be left *Undone*. And he whom thou callest thy *Lord* and *Saviour* shews thee a Work of far greater *Necessity*. Luk. 10. 42. and Joh. 9. 4. A Work which thou must concern thy self to do in the *First place*, and prefer it above every thing else in the *World*. And if thou Contri-

vest no better, and takest no more Care of *that Work*, but to run it up in the *Narrows*, yea even quite *Thrust* it out still with other Matters : If thou count'st it enough to Serve Him, who gives thee all thy *Time* here in this World for his Service, Only with the World's *Reliques*, when thou hast nothing else to do, and scarce so neither : O what *Account* of thy Time canst thou hope, with any *Comfort*, to render at his *Tribunal*, when *Time* with thee shall be no more ! If thou Wantest *Time* to do God's Work, thou wilt Want an *Eternity* to Enjoy his Rewards. And if thou dost not Work the *Works* of him that Sent thee, while it is *Day*, The *Night* will be upon thee, when thou canst not *Work*. And then if thy *Course* be Finish'd, before thy *Work* is done, Thou wilt Bewail the Want of *Time*, when too Late to Call Back what thou hast thrown away to other Purposes, quite *Forreign* and *Impertinent* to that great *End*, for which the precious *Talent* was put into thy Hands. Even the men of greatest *Business*, that had most to do in the World, when, at last, they come to *Leave* it, shall perceive, That no men else upon Earth were more *Concern'd* than Themselves, to *Care* for their Souls, and *Flee from the Wrath to come*, and Mind the Way to *Heaven*, and *Work out their own Salvation* : (However they Turn'd their Heads another way, and were all Taken up still about somewhat else :) and shall wish, when *Time* is *Past*, That they had Neglected every thing in the World, rather than this

this *One thing*, which is of Absolute Necessity to be done. Here then Behold a Commendable *Thrift* and *Covetousness*, To be Greedy of Opportunities for thy *Soul*, To Engross and Steal Time from other *less Concerning* Matters, for *Prayer* and the Worship of God: Yea to Make *Times* for this Service, whatever Business else thou *Entrenchest* upon. And here's the Unexceptionable, holy *Epicurism*, (if thou canst hit upon it,) to be taken up with such sweet *Satisfaction* this Way, as to reckon an *Hour* so spent Better than a *Thousand* otherwise bestowed.

Tho I would not lay a *Snare* for any ones Conscience, in obliging them to Believe, That they can never in any case, without Sin, omit any *Accustomed Office*, when some great *Occasion* Intervening may call another way, Yet *Constancy* in a good Course, is a commendable Virtue: and the Spiritual Life is more *Orderly*, when we have our *Stated Times*, which we will not commonly Break, nor be easily taken off by any *Trivial* accidents. Every day we want the other things mentioned in our *Lord's Prayer*, as well as *Daily Bread*. And the daily need we have of *This*, teaches us also, together with this, to beg *the rest*. Is he a *Man* or a *Bruit*, that makes not Prayer the *Key* to unlock the Day, and the *Bolt* to shut it up? The *Jews* counted it the *Abomination of Desolation*, when, under *Antiochus*, the Daily Sacrifice was *Suspended*. And justly may we count that an *Ominous day*, in which no Sacrifice of our *Prayers* has been offered.

red. It is as if no *Sun* had Risen that day: and leaves us worse than without a *Sun*, *Without God in the World*. When Prayer should be as the very *Pulse* of our Souls. And even every Breath we fetch, should be as a *Breathing after God, the Living God*, in whom we ever *Live and Move and Are*: and upon whom we do hang every *Moment*, for Life and Breath and all things that ever we *Have, or Hope for*.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Licensious Asking Unfit things.

Prayer is a professing of ourselves to be *Poor and Needy*, That we have not so much as a Bit of *Bread*, but what we *Eg*. And therefore our Gracious Lord directs us to Open our mouths in *Prayer*, that he may Fill them with *Good*. Yet the Liberty to ask what we *Will*, doth not *Authorize* us to ask, *That we may Consume on our Lusts*, or Reak *Vengeance* on our *Enemies*. To look up for Supplies of this *Life*, is *Nature's Prayer*, without *Grace*. Yea the *Bruit Creatures* are directed to it even without *Reason*. *The young Lions roar after their Prey, and Seek their Meat from God*. Psal. 104. 21. They that Enlarge their Desires, as *Hell* and the *Grave*, and are not Satisfied, Craving their *Portion in this Life*, their Belly full of God's *Hidden Treasure*; may have their Wishes, with *Lean-ness*

ness sent into their Souls. And that will be a *Canker*, to eat out the very Heart of all the *Blessings*. They Live, but to *Eat*, and so all their Praying, is serving no God save only the *Pelly*. Whereas our *Lord* hath taught us to ask *Three* Petitions, For his *Glory*, *Kingdom*, and *Pleasure*, before we speak a word of our own *Bodily* Necessity. *Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done.* And then *Give us this Day our Daily Bread.* Spiritual Blessings should ever be sought *First* : and the *Temporal* but for Spiritual *Ends* : Not to *Unfit* us for Duty, or *Hinder* us in the Service of God, but that we may Serve him with the more *Quiet* Minds, and *Cheerful* Spirits. It must not be *Meat for our Lusts*, (with the wanton *Israel*,) but *Food Convenient*, which was the considerate *Agur's* Prayer. And what is *Convenient*, we must leave *Infinite Wisdom* to Judge, be at the Finding of our *Heavenly Father*, and willing he should *Chuse our Inheritance for us.* 'Tis the Blessing from *Above*, that makes what we have *Bread*, to Nourish and Satisfy, and do us Good. And the Prayer which Implores that *Blessing* Sanctifies it to us, and makes it *Ours*, and indeed *The Childrens Bread*. But wicked Worldlings care not *How* or *Whence* it comes, So that they *have it*. They are not so much concerned to get the *Blessing of Heaven*, as the *Fullness of the World*. Or if they ask any *Blessing*, it is only the *Blessing* that *maketh Rich*, and helps them to Prosper and take Root, and spread themselves and Flourish in the *Earth*.

Earth. They would only Serve their turns upon the *Lord*, to get Deliverance and Prosperity, that they may take their Liberty to *Live after the Flesh*, and have the fairer opportunities to fulfill all their *Lusts*. Their Prayers are but the *Reakings* of their good *Stomachs*, and the Boiling up of their *Lustful Appetite*. Health and Wealth, Seasonable Weather and Plentiful days, with Peace and Liberty to *Enjoy the World*, is the top of all their wishes. They give themselves for Proofs, That *Corah* and his Company were not the only men Swallowed up of the *Earth*: When alas, Themselves are Sunk and lost, and even *Buried Alive* in it: Till Dead to *God* and quite off all *Traffick* with *Heaven* They think they can never have Enough of the *World*: But they shall have *Enough*, when the dust of the *Grave* has stopt their *Mouths*, and then wish *too Late*, that they had been *Wiser*, and covetēd earnestly *Better Gifts*.

But there are *Extravagant* Prayers which are *Blasphemous* to be Made, and would *Undo* the Petitioner, to have them Granted. When men Pray for *God's Dishonour*, and their own *Shame* and *Ruine*: and would have themselves or others *Confounded* and *Damned*. They may find themselves too soon at the end of their *Cursed Wishes*. And had they any sense in them, and would but ever give themselves leave to *Consider*, they would dread so to *Dare* the *God* that has *Power to Kill and cast them into Hell*. To beg of *God* for any *Wicked* thing, is not only a *Profanation*

Profanation of Prayer, and turning the Means of Grace into an Instrument of *Villany*, But it is also a *Chusing of Death*, and running violently upon the *Wrath to come*, which every man in his *Wits* will do all that ever he is Able, to *Flee from*.

C H A P. V.

Of Licentiousness as to the Object of Prayer.

Prayer is the main part of all our Worship, and to pay this *Royalty* of the Crown of Heaven, The Tribute of *Adoration* to others than to *God himself*, Be it to Images, Saints, Angels, or any thing else, is expressly forbidden. Mat. 4. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and Him Only shalt thou Serve.* In all such *Divided Worship* may be seen the Print of the *Cloven Foot*. To worship any *Creature*, with *Divine Worship*, is to make it an *Idol*: And Idols are of his *Erecting*, who is all for *Usurping* God's Honour to himself. And so the Children which were Offered to the Idols of *Canaan*, were said to be offered unto *Devils*. Psal. 106. 37, 38. The *Apostle* makes *Invocation* peculiar to the God in whom we Believe. Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they*

they Call on Him, in whom they have not Believed ? For I must Believe him to whom I Pray, to be *Omnipresent, Omniscent and Omnipotent* : Or else I am sure he could not Hear and Help me, and all my *Fellow-Supplicants* all over the World, in all the things which we have to Beg. And if *Saints* and *Angels* be *Omnipresent, Omniscent, and Omnipotent*, what then are they less than *Deities* ? And what more can we ascribe to the *most High God* ? As there is but One God, So we are told but of *One Mediator between God and Man*, *1 Tim. 2. 5.* And that is *Enough* : For none can have more *Power and Interest* with God, than He. None can have more *Pity and Kindness* for us. And what we cannot obtain thrô the *Mediation of Jesus* alone, We may despair ever to get, by *Ingratiating* ourselves with any other *Friends*. This *One* is better than all the *Strings*, which they have at *Rome* to their *Bow*. He that taught us to say, *Our Father*, adds not a *Syllable* of any *Prayers* that we are to make to his *Mother*. Nor does God stand in need, (like the *imperfect Princes of the Earth*,) to be *Solicited* by *Courtiers* and *Proxies*, who must indeed first *Learn* from Him, the very *Matter* which they present to Him. And all the *Good Manners* of fetching this wide *Circuit*, is utterly spoil'd by the *Disobedience* of the thing. It is such a piece of *Good Breeding*, as the Law calls *Treason*, to give the *King's Crown* to a *Courtier*. It is to offer *Rebellion for Sacrifice* : and pretend to *Honour God*, with the *Violation* of his own *Law*. It's

It's true, We may desire our present Friends, to *Pray for us*. But we use not to stand here, and Call upon some in the *East Indies*: Nor to apply to our Friends, with the very same *Gestures*, and *Expressions*, as unto God Himself. Indeed even the *Ora pro Nobis*, applied by us to those in Heaven, is *Impertinent enough*, and we may better employ ourselves, than so spend our *Breath*: which we know not if ever it *Reach* to them, whither we direct it. But if we shall be allowed capable of Understanding the common *Construction* of the *Popish Offices*, as plain as words can express, They do Pray *Directly* to *Saints*, for the very same things, that we do to God.

As for us, We would *Honour* God's *Saints* more, than to think them so *Proud*, as ever to *Arrogate*, or *Abide*, the *Glory* of their *Blessed Maker* to be conferred upon Them: Or to think them *Ambitious* of that *Worship*, which was the *Devil's* desire. When their language on Earth, was, *Sirs*, *Why do ye these things?* *Stand up*, *I my self also am a man*. See thou do it not. Sure they have not since, *Unlearn'd* that *Humility* in *Heaven*, for which they were so *Eminent* here below, as to thank us now for the *Service*. No, they are too *Good*, to *Endure* it. And they that Pray to an *Image*, Not only do *Dishonour* the *Infinite Majesty*, that can never be so *Represented*, without being most grossly *Abused*: But also *Debase* themselves into a *Likeness* with that *Senseless* thing, which they

they fall down to. Psalm 115. 8. *They that make them are Like unto them; So is every one that Trusteth in them.*

And whoever Trusts to any thing which they Are, or Have, to any thing in them or about them: and fly for that *Refuge* to any Fruitions, Interests, Friends, or Creatures in the World, which is only to be found in Him, that Made Heaven and Earth: As they Desert and Disoblige Him, who *will not give his Glory to another*, So they miserably Disappoint and Abuse themselves, and come under the *Imprecation*, Jer. 17. 15. *Cursed is the man that Trusteth in man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and whose Heart departeth from the Lord.*

C H A P. VI.

Of Licentiousness in the Manner of Praying.

S E C T. I.

Taking no Care of the Heart.

WHEN men draw nigh to God with their *Mouth*, and their *Hearts* are far from him, Contenting themselves, to go over so many Words, in the meer *Lip-labour*, and Yawning over some faint Petitions, in a *Listless*, drowsy manner, as if they were not well Awake,

Awake, doing nothing *Heartily, as to the Lord:*
Yea when their business is not to Meet and Enjoy the *Lord*, but like such as Visit only out of a *Formality*, and not for any *Cordial Friendship*, care not if the Person be at *Home*, or no, so that they have performed the *Task*: They do but *Take the Name of God in Vain*, and take on them to Worship. For it is but the *Picture or Carkass of Worship*, no Worship indeed, unless we *Serve him with our Spirit*. If it be not the *Act of the Mind*, it is not *We*: and no more than *Personating the Devout*. When the Supplicants have no concern, either to *Prepare the heart for Prayer*, or to keep it *Intent upon the work in Praying*: When they presumptuously go forth in their own *Strength*, and rush upon the Service, without considering what they are going about: And when fallen upon it, they mind not whither the Heart *Roves and gads*: Let the *Tempter Jog and Interrupt them*, as the *Pythonesse* did St. *Paul*, when he went to Prayer, *Acts 16. 16*. Yet they take no care to seize, and call in the *Vagabond Thoughts*: Then the Prayer is nothing else, but only so much *Said*, and a *Huddle of Words* pour'd out into the empty Air: Of no Significancy at all, but only to Accuse and Condemn them, for making so Bold with the *Searcher of Hearts*, To lie Babbling in his Presence, and make but a Noise, as *Sounding Brass*, and the *Tinkling Cimbal*: Yea, and commit a sort of *Perjury*, Invocating the *Deity*, to witness but a *Lye*,

a *Lye*, because they Intend nothing less than what they say: and if they but stay out the *Time*, and run over the *Words*, the work is done: Such careless Prayers are never like to effect any great and Desirable matters. And when *Duty* so flags, no wonder if their *Comfort* also droops; for the vigorous *Exercises* of Godliness are the *Oyl* to keep in the shining *Lamp* of Heavenly Hope and Joy. And when the *Heart*, instead of stooping down under the humble *Sense* of Sin, is *Lifted* up in a Proud conceit of themselves, and so directly *Contradicts* the Self-abasing work they are upon: Instead of Praying in *Faith*, Believes nothing that *God* hath said, and so puts a *Bar* to all their Hopes of receiving any thing at his *Hands*: Instead of abounding with *Love*, is full of Cores and Malice, neither for the Giving, or Forgiving *Charity*, and so turns the Supplication even into an *Execration*, because our Lord, (who has charg'd us, *when we Stand*, (or set ourselves upon) *Praying, to Forgive*) Teacheth us to ask and Expect the Mercy to *Ourselves*, but only as we shew and Extend it to *Others*: And when, instead of Burning with fervent *Zeal*, (like the Fire in the *Alembick*) to send up its earnest Desires, the *Heart* is Playing behind the *Curtain*, and the *Oscitant* pretenders to Worship do but Trifle, and offer up a *Heartless* Service: as those who seem very *Indifferent* whether they be Heard, or not, yea rather *Afraid* to be taken at their *Words*: All this

this while, there may be somewhat like *Seeking*, but here is no *Striving to Enter*, when the Heart is no more *Engaged to the Lord*. Nay 'tis but a meer piece of *Mock-Devotion*, that instead of *Attoning* for our Sins, does but *Add* still more to the Number. And then, alas, What *Hope* can men have from such kind of *Prayers*, even for which they have a great deal more to *Answer*? No Wit or Parts, or the most curious Art to Pack words neatly together, is enough to make a good Prayer, without the *Drawing Nigh of the Heart*, and the *Spirit of Supplication*. The *Springs* of Action, upon what Motives we proceed, and to what Ends we do it, are most of all to be regarded ; tho they be *Latent*, like the Roots of things that lye under *Ground*: Yet in the Scrutiny and Examination of ourselves, this is the main Enquiry, Whether our *Principles* and *Designs* be right and sound at the Bottom? Whether God's holy *Fear* and *Faith* and *Love* set us a going? and whether the *Pleasing* of his Will, the *Honouring* of his Name, and the attaining of his *Favour*, to be made *Liker* and to be brought *Nearer* to Him, be our grand Aim and Intention. Better let the Heart lead the Words, thô they be but *few* and *mean*, than be full of fine *Expressions*, and no *Heart* to follow. But O how is the *Deceiver Deceived*, that goes about to *Mock* the only Wise God? As good Affront him in the *Face of the Sun*, as to Dissemble with him in the *Secret of the Heart*.

Heart. And let such as are for playing the *Hypocrite* with him, but forbear till they can do it so, as he shall not be *Aware* of it, And then, be sure, they will never *Dare* to offer it.

S E C T. II.

Taking no Care of the Words.

THE main Province of man, is to *Keep his Heart*, but yet it is not *All*, nor the *Only* thing that he hath to look after. He must see, that out of the *Abundance* of his Heart, his *Mouth* speak to the Purpose, and as Becomes him. 'Tis an intolerable Presumption, for poor Mortals, that are but Sinful wretched Worms, to be *Rash* with their Mouths, to utter any thing that comes *Uppermost*, (tho never so Crude and wild,) before the most High and Wise and Holy *God*. As if the Words of Prayer needed no other recommendation than *Boldness*, and men might speak what their List, in the greatest *Presence*. As if they thought the Lord either such a *Sorry Master*, whom any thing were good enough for: Or one so *far off*, as to be out of Hearing, and not to Know what were said. But it is the Liberty of *Praying*, not of *Prating*, that I plead for. If it be a *License* taken, I am sure, it is not *Given*, to roll and *Luxuriate* in empty Expressions, without either *Spirit*, or so much as any

any *Good Sense*. To prevent which, we may do well to *Digest* aforehand the *Words*, as well as the *Matter* of our Prayers. At least to have in store and readiness such a Stock of *Anthen-tick Expressions*, as are fit and proper for our *Devotions*: Out of which we may produce what is *Pertinent*, and not be at a *Loss*, to express the *Sentiments* and wishes of our *Hearts*.

Tho an easy *Unaffected Stile*, suited to the Understanding and Infirmitie of the Worshippers, is the fittest and best: Because *Words* in Prayer, are used more for our own *Sakes*, than His, that understands our *Desires*, without our *Words*: Yet too *Loose* a Dress argues a *Contempt* of the Presence we are in. When if the Tongue be but kept *Going*, any impertinent *Clack*, or the most coarse and tatter'd stuff shall serve the turn. Nay so *Weak* and *Flat* are some, and so *Homely* and *Fulsome* are others in their Prayers, that, (if we may here credit Reports,) The *Silliness* of the one, and the *Rudeness* of the other, makes their Company in *Pain* for them: and where others beg to be *Heard*, it might be better for them, if God did *not Hear* them. Their very *Tone* of Prayer, betraying their *Contempt* of Heaven, when they *Gabble* over what they have to say, without any *Submissive Voice*, or *Lively Accents*, or *Affectionate Strain*, to shew how *Awful*, and in what *good Earnest*, they are. Our *Voice* is the *Index* of our *Mind*, and by

that we signify the Devotion which is in our *Hearts*. And he that talks at *Random* before the Lord, shews little care that his Heart is in, to perform Service meet for *God's Acceptance*. We had as good Pray in an *Unknown*, as in an *Unregarded* Language. The one is to say, *We Know not what*, and the other, *We Care not what*. But if we must Worship with the Spirit, it is requisite we should *Know* what we say, and Pray with the *Understanding*, or else how can our *Mind* and *Spirit* be concerned? 'Tis less *Affront* to be *Silent* before the Lord, than to offer to Him Service that is to us, *Unintelligible Gibberish*, or *Empty Talk*. And I cannot but tax it for a very condemnable *Intemperance* and *Looseness* of Speech, in Prayer, when the Tongue is suffered to run out, quite beyond the Sense and Devotion of the *Speaker*, and also as far beyond the Attention and Patience of the *Hearers*. When the Prayers are spun out to a *Tedious Length*, to shew how far a man is able to hold out, and *Fade* and tire all his Company, till they Long for nothing more, than to be out of that *Pain*; and then rejoice in the Deliverance, and *Dread* such another Affliction. May they Beware, by whom such *Offence* comes, that they *Distaste* not any, (too apt to *Imbibe* such *Prejudices*) against the *Worship of God*, to whom, they should use all *Ingenuous* and *harmless Artifices*, to *Recommend* and *Endear* it.

S E C T. III.

Taking no Care of the Behaviour in Prayer.

GOD that is *Terrible out of his Holy Places*, ought Greatly to be Feared of all that are about Him. And none of his *Kindness* to us, must ever tempt us to forget our *Distance*, and *Grow* upon Him, as if he were but *Such a one as our selves*. Ignorant people think basely of God, in the form of an *Old man*, sitting in his *Chair*: to which Bungling Conceit the *Popish Painters* have lent their Help, daring so to *Picture* Him that is *Invisible*, and *Incomprehensible*. And answerable to the *Opinion* conceived of God, uses to be the *Worship* paid to him. When men think Low and *Slightly* of God, they can be as *Rude* and *Saucy* with him, and divulge their *Inward Contempt* in their *Carriage Abroad*: Presenting no *Oblations*, but what more *Affront* than *Honour* him. As if they came not to *Adore* and *Pray*, but to *Vaunt* and *Huff*, to *Shew* or *Divert* themselves, to *Scandalize* their Neighbours, and *Sadden* the hearts of some, and make a *Game* for others: To cast their *Dirt* and *Scorn* upon *Holy things*, in their *Yawning* or *Sleeping* over them, or *Laughing* the while, and *Playing* with them. And by their *Countenance* and *Gesture* and *Actions*, shewing no more *Concern* in the *Worship of God*, than if

it were an idle *Gambol*, or the most Trivial business. They will observe and Revere a *frail man* that shall Dye, but make even nothing of the Almighty, Everliving God, who *Awes* the World with a *Look*, and will make his Despisers discern, to their eternal Cost, between them that *Honoured*, and them that so *Vilified* Him. *Christians* that behave themselves *Rude* and *Unmannerly* in their Worship, shall be condemned in Judgment by the *Turks*, who are said to be so *Curious* in this point, they think it will Spoil all their *Prayers*, if they but *Scratch the head with a Finger*, while they are upon them. The dreadful *Judge of Quick and Dead* is not to be treated after the rate of an ordinary man. They that have such a *Clownish Familiarity*, have never the more, but the less *Friendship with God*. The Prayer that *Puffs up*, serves but to do us *hurt*. When we are *Proud of our Prayers*, (which are indeed but Acknowledgments of *Indigence* and *Guilt*, and Offices of *Humiliation* and *Repentance*,) we quite mistake their *Design*, and shall as much fail too of their *Success*. And instead of Drawing nigh to God, He will *See us afar off*. 'Tis his Grace to take even our *Best* in good part at our hands, (which is but a mean Present for the *most High* :) and to imploy sinful Worms in his Service, who *Humbles* himself to Behold, even the things that are in *Heaven*, and hath the highest *Angels* ambitious to Attend upon His *Throne*. And if

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we use to Applaud ourselves, (*Principibus placuisse viris*,) to fit the Humour of Great men, How much more should we rejoice, to be Acceptable to Him in whose *Favour is Life*? Who (unless we *hold Back*, what is in our *Power to Give*,) will not Despise us, that *it is no Better*, when he sees we *Have no Better*. But he will not endure, that Proud *Scorners*, and rude *Lubbers* should come to his Face, only to *Pollute* his Ordinances: but will cast their wretched Offerings, as *Dirt*, in their Faces, especially, when they are called by his *Name*, and pretend to be a People *Nigh* to Him, And yet he could not be *worse Served*, by any that are *Afar off*, but his *Name* is more *Dreadful among the Heathen*: Tho *Religion* then is not to be *Gawdy*, yet we must not strip it so *Naked*, (under pretence of *Spirituality*,) that it appear in no *Decent Garb*: Nor make *Irreverence*, and a *Worship* without any *Becoming Circumstances*; the distinguishing *Note* of a *Godly man*. For that is the way to bring all our *Religion* under a just *Suspicion*; when we carry towards the great Adorable *Object* of it, as if we had no *Awe* of Him, nor *Regard* or *Love* to Him. *Cursed is he that doth the Work of the Lord so Negligently*. At his *Peril* it is, who meddles not with the *Worship* of God, but to *Expose* and *Blaspheme* it: and Wo be to that man whose very *Oblations* are the highest *Provocations*.

S E C T. IV.

Of Praying, without taking care of our Living.

TH E Blessed God who *Lacketh nothing*, stands not in such Need of men's *Services*, as to accept the Present that is all Soiled with *Filthy Hands*. When he accepts nothing indeed from us, but only to do us a *Kindness*: and makes us much more *Beholden* to Him, to take *Notice* of our Offering, than ever we can *Oblige* Him with the Service. He will Abhor even our *Holy things*, if we Abhor his *Holy Ways*. Therefore when we are off our *Knees*, the Apostle cautions us, to take heed how we *Walk*. 1 Pet. 1. 17. *If ye Call upon the Father, who, without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, Pass the time of your Sojourning here in Fear.* All the Religion of wicked men, is upon their *Knees*, without looking to their *Steps*. They may sometimes shew Devout in their *Prayers*, who yet are most Profligate in their *Lives*, and use their Offices, only as a *Cloak* for their Sins, and to *Compound* with the Divine Justice, for *Going on still in their Trespasses*:

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Depositing their Pageant-like Piety in the Church, only to make a Shew with on Holidays. But such as are so Rotten and corrupt at Heart, and quite

quite out in the very *Drift* and *tenour* of their Life, must not think to put off the Holy *Jealous God*, with a parcel of Good Words, and Demure Looks, and fine Postures. He will scorn all the Prayers of such as cast off his *Fear*, and disregard his *Holy Word*. They shall cry in vain for *his Help*, that neglect their honest Endeavors to *Help themselves*. They that *Trust in the Lord*, and do no Good, but presume that *Christ* will Save them, against his own *Gospel*, are a sort of Worshippers, that are like to find as little Success in their *Praying*, as God finds Integrity and Piety in their *Walking*. Their *Carnal Living* spoils all their *Spiritual Worshipping*. They shall find small *Wellcome* with Him, when they love to be most *Unlike Him*. When they cannot abide his *Friends*. And love none so well as the Worst of his *Enemies*: Nay can Blasphemously *Swear* elsewhere as fast by the *Name* of their *Maker*, as they *Bow* mannerly at *Church* to the *Name* of their *Saviour*. And when they take on them to *Pray* the *Lord to have Mercy upon them*, for *Taking his Name in Vain*, and to *Incline their Hearts to keep that Law*, and yet are so far from *Minding* what they *Say*, that presently after, in the accustomed manner, they fall *Foul* upon Him, and make nothing of it, to *Play* with that tremendous Name, as their *Bable*. O how *Vain* are their *Oblations*? What *Abomination* is their *Incense*? Yea, what *Iniquity* even their *Solemn Meeting*?

ing ? As good they *Slew a Man, as Kill'd an Ox* : or *Cut off a Dogs neck, as Sacrific'd a Lamb*. Isa. 66. 3. *If any man be a Worshipper of God, and do his Will, him he Heareth*, Joh. 9. 31. The only acceptable *Worshippers*, are *Conscientious Dealers*, and *inoffensive, useful, holy Livers*. They must keep their Hearts in *Awful obedient Frame at All times*, who would find them ready for the Service of God, at *Prayer-Times*. And such as live in *God's Eye* and *presence*, and are so much *Concerned* and *taken up with Him*, Dare not do the *Ill things* which, they know, would spoil all their *Welcome* with Him, and *Turn his Face against them*. They that would not have *God's Grace Wanting to them*, must be careful, that they be not *Wanting to his Grace*, and not think to have what they will, in their *Prayers*, who do what they list, in their *Lives*. Nor use their *Prayers*. to save them the *Labour* of doing any *thing else in the Religious practice* ; but to get *Strength* for the performance of all their other *Offices*. Psal. 119. 145. *I Cried with my whole heart, Hear me O Lord, I will keep thy Statutes*. He askt not leave to *Offend*, but such *Mercy* as might *Enable* and *Encourage* him, with an *Enlarged heart*, *To run the way of God's Commands*. Our *Prayers* being but *Instrumental* *duties*, therefore our *Religion* does not consist only in going over our *Offices*, of *Course*, but is to make us *Like* our *Heavenly Father*, as like as ever we can be, both in *Being*, and in *Doing Good*. To

To keep up a *Face* of Religious Worship then, and a *Circulation* of some Customary performances, which we are got into a Road of going over, and to take up with so much done, discharging the work, but for it's *own sake* ; Rids no *Ground*, makes not the least Way, Nor brings us ever the Nearer to the Blessed *End*. If we mind not further purposes, to which such Exercises are Intended, we use them to *no purpose*. Nay if we make our Prayers our *Saviours*, and *Rest* in them, and *Trust* to them : They do but lie in our way, to hinder us from the only true *Saviour*. When we should use them, but as the *Boats* and *Bridges*, to help us over to him, and as the *Bucket* to draw out of his Infinite *Fullness* : Not only to *Evidence* the Grace that we have received, but to *Get still More* that we have need of. For such indeed is the *Raggedness* and insufficiency of all our Services, that we extreamly want a Saviour to help us out, and even to Attone for the *Iniquities of our Holy things*, after we have done our Best ; all which is unavailable to Salvation, if the *Lord Jesus* be not our *Strength and our Redeemer*. 'Tis mercy therefore from the Lord, to let us see the *Cracks and Flaws*, the *Fraulties* and *Imperfections* of our best Performances ; that we may not *Erect* our *Plumes*, and be *Proud* of our Prayers, nor *Acquiesce* in them, nor too much *Value* ourselves upon them.

But when men only *Talk* of Believing in *Christ*, but never do it : And when they boldly Sin

Sin on, and *Trust* to their *Prayers* and *Offices*, and *Confess* and *Pray* for *Pardon*, and so to it again ; and make their accustomed *Prayers* a *Super-sedeas* to holy *Practice*, and the *Leaves*, not to *Heal*, but to *Hide* their *Sins* ; thinking the little *Services* of course must set them right still, and make *Amends* for all : *Publicans* and *Harlots* may get to *Heaven*, before such *Formalists*, that so *Profane Prayers*, to *Use* them, without so much as *Minding* to grow better in the *Use* of them. For no entring into the *Kingdom* of *Heaven*, *Except our Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*. And how is it that we must *Out-do* them ? Not in *Fasting* oftner, or *Praying* Longer, and making more ado about *Forms* and *Ceremonies*, and *external Observances* ; in which who more *Critical* and *Exact* than they ? But we must *Exceed* them, in being *Honester* men, and Aiming at *Righter Ends*, and leading *Better Lives*. And not do the seemingly *Right* and *Good* things, from false *Motives*, and with ill *Designs* : But make our *Prayers* the *Rule* of our *Practice*, *Endeavouring* to do, what we *Pray* God to *Enable* us for the doing : And as we *Beg* his *Help*, so *Stirring up the Grace of God that is in us*, and putting forth all the *Strength* we have, to *Help* ourselves.

C H A P. VII.

Licentiousness concerning the Success of Prayer.

SOME men will Pray no longer than they taste the *Sweetness* of it, and are *Drill'd* on by the Pleasure that they find in it. If themselves be not *Favoured*, their *Humour* fitted, and their *Requests* granted, they take *Pett* at Heaven, and are ready to *Quarrel* even with God himself, as if they were not duly *Attended*, and therefore greatly *Wronged*. Like the King of *Israel* who flung away in a *Chafe*, 2 King. 6. 33. Saying, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* Such *Proud Beggars* are many of God's *Petitioners*, that think themselves too *Good to Wait*, thô it be upon the *Most High*: and must have Him at their *Beck*, or else have not the *Patience* to *Stay his Time*, and take *Mercy* in his *Way*: But must *Limit the Holy One*, and go to *Ravish* and *Snatch* the *Blessing* out of his hand. But our *Blessed Saviour* hath taught us more *Manners and Grace*, *That men ought to Pray always, and not to Faint*. Luk. 18. 1. Nor think it *Long*, to tarry his *Leisure*, who has waited so *Long* for our *Return*. If we but *Know ourselves*, and *Remember our Sins*, how *Ill* we merit to be *Regarded at all*, We shall wonder that *Ever we*

we are Heard, instead of grumbling, that it is no *Sooner* or *Better*. Nay we shall see occasion to turn our Complaining into *Thanksgiving*, and not be all upon the *Craving* for more, without Acknowledging, how much we have *Received*, and how little we have *Deserved*. Sinful men are very Bold, to *Ask* all before them, and not remember to Humble themselves, in the *Confession* of their Sins, nor *Recount* the Mercies and Loving kindness of the Lord, and Admire and Bless and Praise him, for all that he has *Already* done for them. But to Pray, only as long as we are chear'd on with a *Briskness* of Spirits, and find our Souls filled as with *Marrow and Fatness*, is not to mind the Pleasing of our Lord, so much, as our own *Pleasure*. It is but to follow *Christ* for the *Loaves*, or Drawn only with the *Savour* of his *Sweet Ointments*. Not in the Sense of *Duty*, and our Obligation continually to wait upon him, with what *Face* soever he is pleased to look upon us. 'Tis not for poor *Beggars* that Live all upon him, and have nothing but from him, Yea for *Obnoxious* Sinners that have Forfeited all, and are out of *Hell* only thro' his Mercy, to be so High and touchy and *Querulous*, if all is not done strait to our *Mind*, and we have not every thing just according to our *Wishes*. It is not such a *Violence* that will ever take the *Kingdom of Heaven*: But the Humble Importance, the Unwearied Waiting, and *Patient*

Patient Continuance in Well doing. And this is Pleasing in the sight of God, to Follow him even when he seems *Displeased* with us, and not Leave off our *Prayers* thô we think he looks *Angry* at them. But *As the eyes of Servants look to the hand of their Masters, and as the eyes of a Maiden to the hand of her Mistress*, So let our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, untill he have Mercy upon us. Psal. 123. 2.

C H A P. VIII.

Licentiousness in flying out against our Fellow-Worshippers.

Men that are *Proudly opinioned* of themselves will take mightily upon them, fiercely to *Rally* at all, that Serve not God, just in their *Mode*. Some all for *Common-Prayer*, and some for none but *Conceived Prayers*. And they cannot forbear bitterly to *Tease* and *Persecute* one another, as if it were worse than *No Prayer*, that is not exactly after such a *Manner*. Yea so Absurd are many to fill the World with Heats and *Quarrels* about the *Way* of others Worship, that were never serious in any Worship of their *Own*, And think they have done a great matter to make the Party *Odious*, that is *Opposite* to theirs.

But

But the question is, What *Service* is thus done to Religion? And how much Devotion is a *Gainer* by it? We know how Strict and Nice were the *Pharisees* for the *Out-side Religion*, Tho none had fouler *In-sides* than they. Who more took upon them to Quarrel even with *Christ* himself! And would be Holier than the *Holy One of God*. Who more *Bitter* against *Better men* than themselves? And what a mad Zeal had *Paul* this way, before his *Conversion*? They that have only the *Form of Godliness*, will be like *Bears bereaved of their Whelps*, to have it taken from them, Because if you strip them of that, you leave them *Nothing*. They have but a *Name to Live*, and would you *Perswade* them out of that? The very *Worst man* that cries up their *Form*, shall please them better, than the *Holiest Christian*, that appears for the *Power of Godliness* it self. And this makes the *Romish Worship* so Agreeable to *Licentious Livers*, That the Offices may go on, and the *Heart* be otherwise taken up the while. The Inner man may *Sleep*, while the Outer is so *Concerned*. And all done to Satisfaction, tho not a *Sin* wounded, nor a *Lust* disturbed, nor any *Grace* exercised. It is enough to turn the Stomachs of all *Serious Good men*, against that *Cause*, which the *Roaring Blades* are the great *Champions* and hot *Sticklers* for. And O how does even a *Good Cause* often suffer by such ill *Abettors*? and lose its *Credit* for their *Sakes*?

Sakes? I cannot but call in question my *Zeal*, when it strikes in with the *Blasphemies* of a *Swearer*, or the *Revilings* of a *Drunkard*, and pleases them better than any else. To *Stigmatize* Persons, and *Ridicule* their Way, makes me never the Better, nor my Way, at all, the *Lovelier*. If I have a *Zeal of God according to Knowledge*, I may find room enough to shew my *Strictness*, without spending all the *Mettle*, in that which least Deserves it. The sharpest *Drolls* are not the Happiest *Teachers*, Nor is he the *Best Christian*, that makes the *Lowdest Cry* against others. *Satirical* and *Dogmatical* Doctors shew too little of his Spirit, who was *Meek and Lowly in Heart*. But we may know whence the *Wisdom* comes, that is *Earthly, Sensual, Devilish*. To call every thing that I dislike by an *Opprobrious* filthy Name, and spend my *Choller* upon it, may shew that I want a *Purge* my self. But where Contending Parties *Overdo*, in their Heats on both Sides, I do not think I am obliged to depart from *Truth* or *Peace*, to Side and *Ingratiate* my self with either. As long as the great *Lord* of the Church doth not *Interest* himself in the *Fiery Disputes*, for Forms or against them, Who art thou that *Condemnest* what he does not? Or layest the Main *Stress* on that which he *Least Regards*? Where doth he warrant thee to *Despise* any good Prayer, because it is a *Form*, or *Imposed*? Or Where does he give thee license to *Scoff* the Effusio-

on, that is more at *Liberty*? In good truth, What is even this, but a *Form* to the Company, and *Imposed* upon them? I dare not call him a *Graceless Formalist*, that uses Forms; Nor him a *Proud Hypocrite* that uses none. For I am satisfied, that *Forms* may be used piously, without *Formality*. And as there may be the *Spirit* of Prayer, without a *Form*, So there may be natural or *Feverish Heat*, without the *Spiritual Fervour*. It is not *Utterance* that makes a *Saint*; Nor Crying up *Church-Orders*, that must needs make one a true *Member of Christ's Church*. I am equally Distasted at both, That call Praying by Habit, *Whining and Cant*: and that call the Liturgy, *Pottage and Idolatry*. I dare not *Deride* Prayer, thô it be not *Cookt* exactly to my Gust, nor *Drest* just in my *Mode*. Nor can I count it the *Effect* of real *Piety*, to be forward in *Drolling* upon any *Holy things*. Prayer is *A kind of Tune which all things Hear and Fear*. Herb. I know I cannot Worship without Faults of my *Own*, and yet I must not therefore leave off all *Worship*. And if I will not bear with *Another's Failings*, but fly from all Worship that is *Faulty*, With whom then shall I *Communicate* on Earth? But if the other perform not his *Part* aright, the Fault is not *mine*. And my *Joyning* with him, is no Engagement upon me, to give my *Consent* and *Approbation* to all that ever I Hear from him. Yet if I am indeed *Athirst*, I shall not refuse good

good Drink, tho it have some *Smack* of the *Cask*. And I should, methinks, be more Warry than Wise, never to trust any *Physitian* or *Proctor*, because it is *Possible* they may Abuse me: Nor ever to *Joyn* with another in Prayer, because I know not before-hand, all that he will Say, nor can tell but a Word may drop that I do not *Like*. I will use my own Words, Yet I will not be so tied to them neither, but if I find others better than my own, I will not scruple to take them. When I am *Conscious*, It is not out of *Laziness*, to save trouble, and take what is *Next me*, But to Serve *God* with that which I count the *Best*. I must not presently be out of *Conceit* with all that I hear *Derided*. For some that are counted the *Ingenious* and *Well-bred* men can *Scoff* at *Scripture* as well as *Prayer*: Yea and *Descant* on the words of *Common-Prayer*, as well as those of other *Prayers*. I care not who make themselves *Merry* with that, wherewith I find my self *Edified*. *Licentious* tongues *Bespatter* all. But the most curious and hasty to *Censure* and *Carp* at *Others*, are commonly the most *Careless* at *Home*, and the *Fairest Marks* to be hit themselves.

The PERORATION, with a Call to Moderation and Devotion.

I Have pleaded for that *Liberty* which may do us a *Kindness*: and also have made some *Strictures* upon the *License* for which we may all be the *Worse*. That which is most *Sweet* may soonest give us a *Surfeit*. And therefore thô it is an *Injury* to be abridged of the *Diet*, yet we must not think it hard to be cautioned against the *Excess*. I mean not the *Excess* of *Praying*, against which I see no need to give Warning: For I know no *Euchite* now to *Capitulate* with, and convince them that *Prayer* is not to *swallow* up all other Offices. To think we must do nothing but *Pray*, is not to *Over-stretch* the *Liberty* of *Prayer*, but to *pinch* and *Grind* upon it. Whereas it will admit of *Pauses*, and yet be *Incessant* too, in the *Apostle's* Sense. As the *Natural Heart* is in perpetual *Motion*, thô it has its *Systole* as well as *Diastole*, and the *Contraction* doth but help the *Dilatation*: So *Prayer* is as the *Pulse* of the *Pious Heart*, and still the *Circulation* goes on: nor are the little *Breaks* and *Interruptions* any *Hindrance*: but only a gathering of fresh *Strength* for the work, that it may go on more *Lively*, and the *Heart* throw out, what it hath been *Gathering*

thering in, more *Vigorously*. But there is little danger of Praying too *Much* or too *Often*. A small stock of *Prudence* with a great Sense of *Want*, and *Love* of Prayer, will teach any well-disposed Christian to be his own *Casuist* in this matter. All the danger lies in another *Extream*, of flying out into the *Wide ways*, which I have been endeavouring to *Bar up*. No fear least Prayer should be laid too *Common*, for every one freely to use it: But least the Liberty should be *Abused*, by the Wild *Beasts of the People*, whom no Inclosure can hold, but they must break thrô all Fences, and will not accept of any Liberty as room enough for them, unless the Extension be in *Infinitum*. Unreasonable Creatures! that cannot be contented with a fair Open *Way* to go in, nay and a Large and Wide *Field* wherein to *Expatriate*, but they must be absolutely Lawless, and *Sui Juris*. Let such complain they have not *More Liberty*: No matter; as long as they that know Better things, see cause to *Rejoyce* and give *Thanks* that they have *so Much*. The Priviledge of such *Freedom in Prayer*, as I have laid open, is a Blessing and Favour indeed, that we cannot enough *Acknowledge* and *Value*. O that ever any should be *Listless* to it, or *Weary* of it! And what *Enemies* to Souls, and a *Mischief* to the World are they, that say or do any thing to *Disgrace* or *Hinder* it? to take men off it, to put them out of conceit with it, and turn them against it?

Let who will *Exaggerate* the Mischiefs of this *Liberty*, and with never so keen *Invectives* Declaim against the *Vindicators* of it, as the Authors of *Confusion* and *Ruin* to the *Church*: We are not by this means to be *Scar'd* and *Ruffled* out of the dear *Purchase* of our great *Redeemer's* Blood. We can as easy cry *Slave-ry*, as they do *Anarchy*. But I hope it will never spoil and undo us, to have *Liberty* to *Say* our *Prayers*, yea and to *Pray* them too. *God* be thanked, we belong not to a *Church* that supports it self by *Tyranny* and *Usurpation*, but by the *Gospel-Doctrine* and *Moderation*: (Wisely taking in the Advantages both of a *Liturgy*, and of *Conceived Prayers*: and so avoiding the Inconveniencies to which the *Sole use* of either might be liable.) However some of her Sons *Degenerate* into a much worse *Temper*, and grow so *Fierce* and *Stern*, to *catch their Fellow-servants by the Throat*, if they do not *Say* just as they do, and *Move* not exactly Like themselves. And thô they would bring an *Odium* upon their *Mother*, and make her taken for an *Imperious*, cruel *Step dame*, Where does she give them any such *Instructions*? and what little cause has she to thank them for being so *Officious*, in helping to make a *Servile* Brood of *Ingenuous* Children? 'Tis not indeed our *Church*, but some that so *Over-stretch* things in it, who would *Invoke* our *Liberty*. And so we must be in *Bondage* to a *Set* of men, that have early *Imbib'd* Principles of *Slavery* themselves,

themselves, and can never be quiet, till they have Clubb'd all into their *Mind* and *Way*. But let such *Overdoers* take heed they prove not in the end, worse *Undoers* of the Church, than any of those they so much declare their deadly *Fears* of. To Vindicate the *Liberty of the Gospel*, will never Hurt any *Church of Christ*. None but the *Antichristian Church*, and such as *Symbolize* therewith, can be against it. But 'tis equally *Rebellion* against the *Lord of the Church*, To offer to *Retrench* that *Liberty* which we have in *Christ Jesus*; and to take the Lawless *Liberty* of the *Servants of Sin*, who are *free from Righteousness*: Or to make that *Liberty* an *Occasion to the Flesh*, which is not indeed a *Liberty to Sin*, but *from it*. Deliver'd we are, but *not to commit Abominations*. And the *Son of God has made us Free indeed*: Tho not to walk in the *ways of our Hearts*, and the *sight of our Eyes*: But to Serve him *Spontaneously*, as a *Willing people* *We are not under the Law, but under Grace*. It's true. Yet must we not therefore turn the *Grace of God into Wantonness*, nor *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound*. God forbid he should so Lose his *Glory*, by granting us *Liberty*. Tho where the *Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty*, Yet if it be the *Spiritual Liberty*, such as our *Blessed Saviour* has Bought us, Be sure it will never be turn'd against *Piety, Loyalty, Sobriety, Honesty, or Charity*. However we may *use or forbear our*

Liberty in things Indifferent, thereafter as we are like to do Good or Hurt with the use: and yet still have it all one to ourselves, as if we did put it in *continual Exercise*. As to the *Inner man*, indeed, we must not be made *Servants to any*; But for the *Outer*, we should make ourselves *Servants even to all*. I say then, as the *Apostle* does of Faith, *Hast thou Liberty? have it to thy self before God*. And that is enough to preserve it fair and Entire *in his Sight*. And as long as thou art well aware, That no *Traditions* of Men can bind thy Conscience, so as the Laws of *God*, Tho thou *Submittest to every Ordinance of man*, it being for the *Lord's Sake*, Thou dost not *Give up* any Freedom which *Christ* thy *Lord* would have thee to *Hold fast*: But tho thou art not to *Say*, and to *Do* every where just as thy *List*, (thou must dread to be such a *Libertine*, so left *Loose* to *Undo* thy self:) Yet still thou enjoyest that *Liberty of Prayer* which I Plead for, as long as thou canst but go with *Hope* and *Comfort* to *God*, as a *Child*, Notwithstanding that in many things thou hast fail'd and offended, and so *Misbehaved* thy self, thou canst not chuse but be *Conscious* how unworthy thou art to be owned in that *Relation*.

Forget not then how Vile and Sinful, how *Diminutive* and *Contemptible*, how even *Nothing*, and worse than *Nothing*, thou art: Be as apprehensive as thou wilt, or canst be,

be, of thy own *Demerits*; that thou maist ever approach the *Majesty of Heaven*, with a becomming *Awe*, and serve thy God, who is a *Consuming Fire*, with *Reverence and Godly Fear*.

But withal Remember, That in Prayer, thou art going to thy *Father*; Displeased, indeed, at thy *Sins*, but Reconciled in his *Son*. And having so great a *Friend*, and so good an *Interest* in Heaven, tho thou thinkest thy self Unworthy to *Look up* thither, Yet with the *Publican*, cry for *Mercy to thee a Sinner*. And after all the *Mischief* done thee by thy *Sins*, let them not quite *Ruine* thy Soul, by taking thee off thy *Prayers*. But the more *Sensible* thou art of Sin, cry the more mightily unto *God*. Yea from the very *Magnitude* of it, (that makes it look most against thee,) thou hast a *Plea* put into thy Mouth, *Psal. 25. 11. For thy Name Sake, O Lord, Pardon my Sin, for it is Great*. He does not go about to *Palliate* and *Excuse* his *Guilt*, and cry, Lord it is but a *Small matter*, therefore thou maist *Easily* pass it by; (He was Wiser and Better, than so to Argue:) But my *Case* is Bad and Sad, My *Sin* is *Heinous* and *Grievous*, past all *Help* and *Cure* in the *World*, but *Thine*, who art never at a *Loss* to *Effect* what we would have: Too *Great* for any, but the *God* infinitely *Great and Good*, to Forgive. There is no *Good* in me, to *Invite* thee to do it for me: O do it therefore for thy *Glory*, even to *Glorify thy Power*

Power and Mercy : That where *Sin hath A-bounded*, thy *Grace* may *Triumph*, in *Supera-bounding*. And then what can Spoil the *Free-dom of thy Prayers*, when thy very *Sins* may be turned into *Arguments*, not only to *Hasten* thee to the *Throne of Grace*, but also to *Prevail* for thee there ? Thus thou hast all the reason in the world, to Beg hard for *Mercy*, now in this only *Time of Mercy* : and thou hast all *Encouragements* too on every side thee, upon thy *Seeking*, to find it.

Whatever thou hast *Been*, and however thou hast *Done*, Yet thy case would not be *Desperate*, didst thou *Return*, upon thy *Submission*, with the *Prodigal*, to thy *Father* : And not only *Confess* thou hast *Sinned*, but *Beg* and cry *Mightily* to be *Reincorporate* of his *Family*, and numbred among his *Servants*. Then matters would *Clear up* with thee, and *Heavenly Hopes* would *Dawn* upon thee, and *Mercy*, on every side, *Embrace* thee, and our *God* would *Abundantly Pardon*. For he delights to be so *Won* with a poor *Sinner's Cries* ; and *Waits to be Gracious*, that we may *Remember* ourselves, and let him have the *Opportunity*, to *Glorify* his *Mercy* in our *Recovery*.

But O Sick, and sadly Distemper'd are the *Souls*, and Rueful and Ruinous is their *Case*, to whom *Prayers* are a *Burthen* and affliction, and who are out of *Conceit* with all that should do them *Good*, and *Prejudiced* against the very *Means* of their *Salvation* ! Even ready to be *Un-done*,

done, and yet Listless to seek for *Remedy*, having no Heart nor Tongue to cry to Him that alone is *Able* to help them.

To Conclude then, Not only *Believe* and own, but take and *Use* the Liberty granted, and make thy *Benefit* of it. *Down with thy Knees, up with thy Voice.* Herb. And do not lie and Perish in thy *Sins*, for want of thy *Prayers*. But being *Permitted to Speak for thyself*, O Prize the Happy Priviledge, and with all Thankfulness and gladnes, catch hold of such an *Advantage*. Let not *Prayer* (as the *Poet* said of *Probity*,) be *Prais'd* and *Starv'd* : After the manner of such as will cry, God forbid we should Neglect our *Prayers*, We must Pray *Everywhere* : When God knows, that in good truth they Pray *no where*. But their Chambers and Families, their own Housles, and God's too, can *Testify* against them, that they are no *Lovers* of this *Exercise*, nor were ever any *Well willers* to *Prayer*. But do thou give it a *real Commendation*, as thou dost to the *Beloved Fare* that pleases thee best, by *Feeding Heartily* upon it. And not only *Talk* of *Praying*, but *Do it*. Nor only in a *Fit*, or on the *By*, But make a *Serious* and *Solemn* Busines of it. And Ply and Follow it, like one that is in *Love* with it, and Fond and Greedy of it, even as a *Miser* is of the greatest *Lucre*, or an *Epicure* of the *Choicest Dainties*. O whither should the *Cold* and *Hungry* go, but to the *Fire*, and to the *Table* ? And whither should the *Obnoxious* and *Guilty* repair, but to the God that *Pardons Iniquity*,

quity, Transgression and Sin? with whom is Forgiveness that he may be Feared. Whither should they Betake themselves, that want Every thing, but to Him that is the Possessor of All things? And as we count our Meat does us Good, when we come to it with a Good Stomach, So to have such a good Appetite to our Prayers, will make them Salutary, and the Savour of Life to our Souls.

O never think much to Leave all, to go unto Him whom thy Soul Loveth: But say, Welcome Sweet and Dear Prayer, Come bring me to my God, to Converse with Him, to Draw from him, and to Receive what he is not only infinitely Full of, but as Inclinable to make his poor Creatures Happy with. Let it be the most pleasant Entertainment of thy Life, which thou need'st not be Spurred on to, But set thy Mind upon it, have thy Heart in it, and make it the Solace of thy Soul, to be taken up with thy God. Let the God of all Grace hear thee every day at his Gates, There Throw thy self, and lie and Cry, and never leave off thy Prayers, till they be turn'd into his Everlasting Praises, and thou hast no more to Beg, but all thy work will be For ever to Bless His Name, For Answering thee in all the Wishes of thy Heart.

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